

# For Reference

---

NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THIS ROOM

# For Reference

NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THIS ROOM

Ex LIBRIS  
UNIVERSITATIS  
ALBERTAEASIS



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
LIBRARY

Regulations Regarding Theses and Dissertations

Typescript copies of theses and dissertations for Master's and Doctor's degrees deposited in the University of Alberta Library, as the official Copy of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, may be consulted in the Reference Reading Room only.

A second copy is on deposit in the Department under whose supervision the work was done. Some Departments are willing to loan their copy to libraries, through the inter-library loan service of the University of Alberta Library.

These theses and dissertations are to be used only with due regard to the rights of the author. Written permission of the author and of the Department must be obtained through the University of Alberta Library when extended passages are copied. When permission has been granted, acknowledgement must appear in the published work.

This thesis or dissertation has been used in accordance with the above regulations by the persons listed below. The borrowing library is obligated to secure the signature of each user.



THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE FIGURE OF THE CLOWN IN WYNDHAM LEWIS

by



JOHN DAVID MIGHTON

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

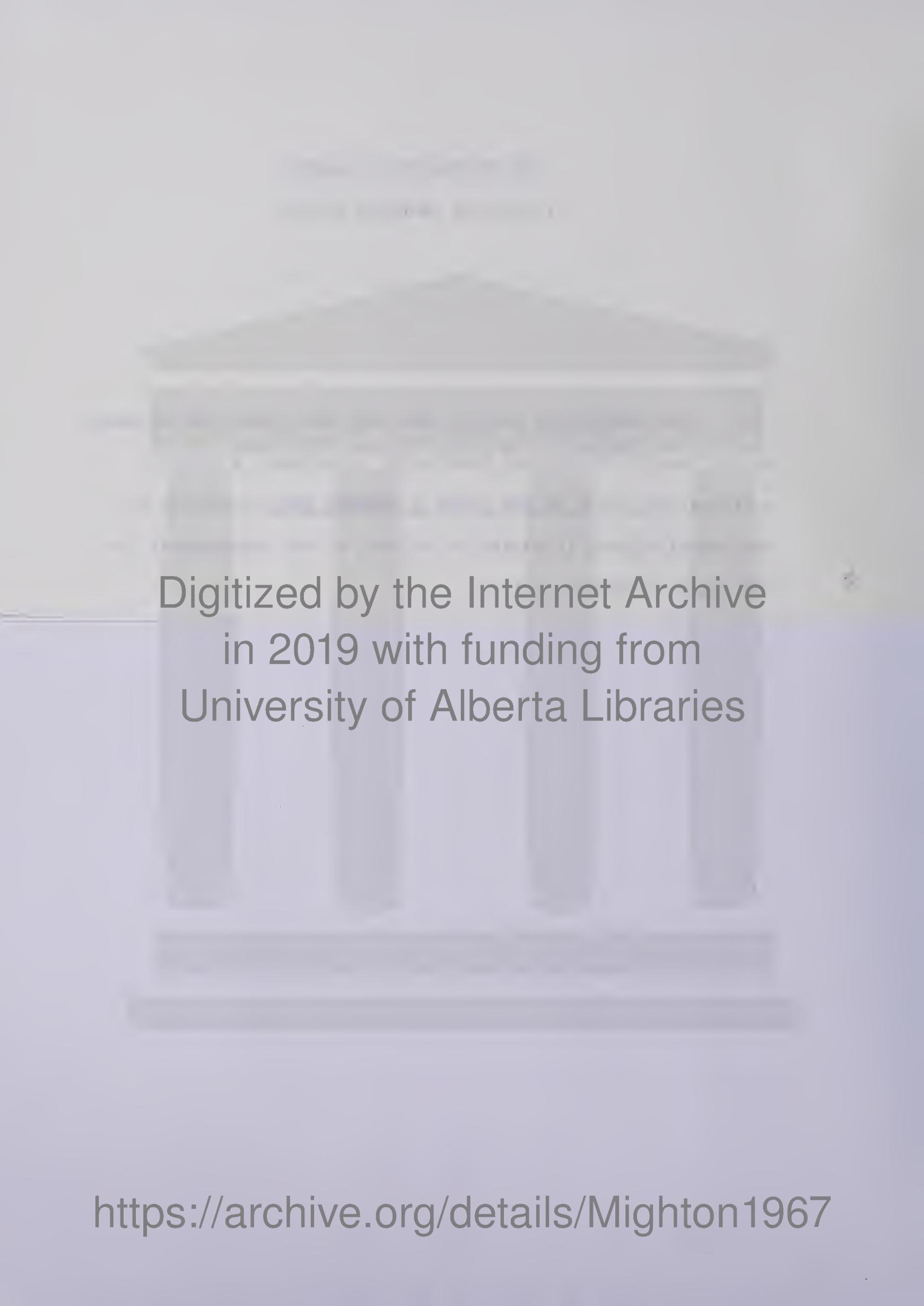
EDMONTON, ALBERTA

OCTOBER, 1967.



THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend  
to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis  
entitled THE FIGURE OF THE CLOWN IN WYNDHAM LEWIS submitted by  
John David Mighton in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Arts.

A faint, grayscale background image of a historical document. The document features a large, ornate seal at the top center, surrounded by dense, illegible text arranged in a grid-like structure, likely tables or lists. The paper shows signs of age, including creases and discoloration.

Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2019 with funding from  
University of Alberta Libraries

<https://archive.org/details/Mighton1967>

## ABSTRACT

The figure of the clown is perhaps the most flexible and all-embracing symbol for the many facets of human nature. Artists usually see the clown from one or another particular point of view. Lewis, however, employs the clown as a comprehensive figure who is made to represent virtually the entire spectrum of human personality. One also finds, in Lewis's works, characters who attempt, by adopting a clownish role, to take advantage of the various traditions associated with the figure. In this way the viability of the role of the clown is confused and weakened.

The first chapter contains a brief review of the early development of the figure from the court fool as a mere parasite and scapegoat to the intelligent critic of society who uses the cap and bells to mask individual freedom of expression. An example is given of how, in the twentieth century, the role of the fool as privileged critic might be exploited for political purposes. Observations are made in connection with the popularity of Charlie Chaplin, the twentieth century's most famous clown. The obsessive interest in the clown is illustrated by reference to the works of several modern painters.

The various human types which appear as clown figures in the works of Lewis are classified in chapter two. The complicated psychology involved in the relationship between circus clowns and their audience is investigated, primarily, with reference to "The Cornac and His Wife", Lewis's story about a particular performance of a small circus troop. A description of the common man as fool or clown is



based on Lewis's expository works as well as the stories in The Wild Body, in which are found people whose lives are mesmerized by adherence to a particular fetish which becomes the centre of an "inferior religion". The unique individual who overtly departs from the norm is examined as a clown, with reference to Lewis's short story "The Bishop's Fool" and his play The Enemy of the Stars. The artist, because of his distinctive personality and relatively eccentric behavior, is regarded in a similar context as a clown. Lewis himself is then considered as qualifying in certain respects for the title of clown.

Chapter three begins with a brief discussion of role-playing. An examination of Lewis's Childermass reveals the ultimate Lewisian clown-figure, the Bailiff, who by assuming a variety of clownish roles uses the guise of the clown to control for his own or some hidden purpose the common humanity of which the clown in such diverse ways has been the traditional symbol. Childermass reveals Lewis's awareness of the dangers in having crowd-masters masquerading as clowns in order to control the masses for their own purposes. Exploitation of the clown's role for various personal or political purposes has rendered the traditional symbol so indeterminate that it has virtually destroyed the figure as an expression of man's individuality or his protest against any form of overriding tyranny.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER ONE: THE EVOLVING IMAGE OF THE CLOWN AS HUMAN TYPE AND SYMBOL . . . . .	1
Origin and Development . . . . .	1
Contemporary Interest in the Clown . . . . .	8
The Clown as Subject in Contemporary Painting . . . . .	12
CHAPTER TWO: THE VARIETY OF CLOWN FIGURES IN THE WORKS OF WYNDHAM LEWIS . . . . .	21
The Professional Clown . . . . .	21
The Common Man as Clown . . . . .	30
The Individual as Clown . . . . .	44
The Artist as Clown . . . . .	52
Wyndham Lewis as Clown . . . . .	59
CHAPTER THREE: THE DRAMA OF THE CLOWN AND RING-MASTER . . . . .	65
Role-Playing . . . . .	65
The Drama of Role-Playing in <u>Childermass</u> . . . . .	69
FOOTNOTES: . . . . .	89
BIBLIOGRAPHY: . . . . .	99



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Plate 1 [after p. 13]  
TWO ACROBATS WITH A DOG  
Picasso, 1905.  
Reproduced in Barr, Picasso. Fifty Years of His Art.  
opp. p. 35.

Plate 2 [after p. 14]  
SEATED PIERROT  
Picasso, 1918.  
Reproduced in Keith, Picasso.  
Plate XXI

Plate 3 [after p. 15]  
Two Photographs of Pablo Picasso:  
"Picasso masked as Italian clown welcomes Jean Cocteau  
to the Villa" and "Picasso gets his periodic physical  
check-up".  
From Duncan, The Private World of Pablo Picasso.  
p. 50 and p. 76.

Plate 4 [after p. 15]  
Circus Performers [untitled]  
Buffet, 1955.  
Reproduced in Druon, Bernard Buffet. [unpaged]

Plate 5 [after p. 15]  
Photographs of Buffet Making Himself Up As a Clown.  
From Druon, Bernard Buffet.

Plate 6 [after p. 16]  
THREE CLOWNS  
Rouault, c. 1917.  
Reproduced in Abrams, Rouault.

Plate 7 [after p. 38]  
THREE PHILOSOPHERS  
Wyndham Lewis, c. 1912.  
Signed Wyndham Lewis  
Ink and Chalk (11 X 10 7/8)  
Victoria and Alberta Museum : E3770-1919.



CHAPTER ONE  
THE EVOLVING IMAGE OF THE CLOWN  
AS HUMAN TYPE AND SYMBOL

Origin and Development

The clown stands apart in society as a unique type. Whether he appears in life as a natural fool or in art as a figure of the popular or more sophisticated imagination, he has centuries of recorded tradition behind him.

In Shakespeare's day, when the clown was called fool, he was a familiar figure in daily life who provided the artist with a conventional symbol of man's predicament in the universe. Modern times have consigned the clown to the realm of fancy, and yet this change has scarcely diminished his value as a universal symbol of man's sorrow and joy, his stupidity and sagacity, his fate and hope.<sup>1</sup>

The tradition of the fool or clown goes back as far as man's recorded history. There have probably always been men who go through life in a frivolous and irresponsible fashion, and who are content to earn their bread by the prostitution of their own deficiencies. These persons, if the environment is favorable, may develop a manner of life into a recognized profession. Originally, in ancient Greece and Rome, such men were known as "parasites" or "buffoons". They wandered about making outlandish displays of foolishness in return for food and shelter.

In her historical treatise, The Fool, Enid Welsford sees the buffoon as having a place in the tradition of the fool, because "although he exploits his own weaknesses instead of being exploited by others, although he is no real or pretended madman but merely an absurd ne'er-do-well, nevertheless he resembles other comic fools in that he



earns his living by an openly acknowledged failure to attain to the normal standard of human dignity."<sup>2</sup> The buffoon uses the world as his stage and auditorium, but his buffoonery is not synonymous with acting. It is, rather, a way of life. "The buffoon is neither the unconscious fool, nor the conscious artist who portrays him; he is the conscious fool who shows himself up, chiefly for gain, but occasionally at least for the mere love of folly."<sup>3</sup> Welsford, who gives brief sketches of famous buffoons, both authentic and mythical, concludes with comment on perhaps the most famous of all representations of the type, Shakespeare's Falstaff. Using the world as his stage, Falstaff exploits his own weaknesses and, displaying his wit for amusement and reward, seeks all-the-while to evade reality.<sup>4</sup>

The parasitical buffoon was often morally subnormal, but not usually mentally deficient. The court fool, however, whose history goes back just as far, was nearly always, in his early existence, mentally deranged and physically deformed. His popularity may have been based on a number of things: a sadistic craving for the macabre and abnormal; the belief in the fool's value as a good luck possession; his value as a permanent scapegoat. This latter consideration was based on the theory that there was constantly lurking, in some mysterious manner above those in lofty positions, a sort of "divine envy" or "Evil Eye". In order to avoid this impending danger it was thought expedient to provoke one's neighbors into abuse in order to draw the misfortune to those making the condemnations. But rather than relying on only an occasional transference of this kind, some thought it more



practical to employ a "permanent scapegoat" whose duty would be constantly to abuse his superiors in order to transfer the bad luck onto his own insignificant self.<sup>5</sup> This practice, in addition to a recognition of a normally irresponsible mental state, probably accounts for the customary immunity from punishment given to those wearing the cap and bells.

The popularity of the court fool increased during the later middle ages and reached its highest point during the Renaissance, when the fool became a significant figure in society as well as in literature.<sup>6</sup> Although the custom of keeping court fools apparently continued from the practice in ancient courts, there appears to have been an increasing number of fools who were mentally stable and more dignified than the ancient species, although the latter type still existed as late as the eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Fools came to be appreciated for their cleverness as well as for their clownishness, and were amply rewarded. In the Renaissance especially, court fools sometimes became outstanding personalities, and acquired a notoriety similar to that of the modern film star.<sup>8</sup> And so for a considerable period in the fool's history there were two distinct types, one the ill-treated butt of society, the other the clever individual appreciated for his wit.

For centuries in Christian Europe seasonal folk-festivals were held which were occasions both for sincere religious worship and for lawlessness and foolery. All citizens who took part in the revelry of the festival would "play the fool", but usually one person would be chosen as "Lord of Misrule" or "Prince of Fools". As Welsford puts it:



"Regarded from a certain point of view, then, the folk-festivals seem to consist of concentric rings of folly".<sup>9</sup>

In the Renaissance, however, the folk-festivals underwent a change. During the festival the individual assuming the part of the "Prince of Fools" might see in the role an opportunity for the exercise of the special privilege of free speech traditionally possessed by his relative, the court-fool. The two types of fool, therefore, came to be united in the "Prince of Fools".<sup>10</sup>

A further development in this respect came with the initiation of "fool societies" - associations of intelligent and serious critics of society who would wear the recognized garments of the fool at any time for the purpose of deriding someone for whom they had a dislike. They donned the fool's garb because in so doing they claimed the privilege of the court fool, who could not be punished because of his traditional immunity. The Lord of Misrule and the fool societies were responsible ultimately for conveying the cap and bells "from the shaven heads of the half-witted into the creative imagination of the philosopher, the satirist and the comic poet."<sup>11</sup>

The relationship between the clown or fool and the imaginative artist may still be discerned. Both are regarded with the same sort of curious fascination and thus remain, to a degree, social outcasts. Or, conversely, it may be that an imposed separation from society because of "peculiarity" accounts for the objectivity or detachment which is the sine qua non of artistic vision. As Welsford puts it, "the fool's resilience, the poet's genius, the mystic's sanctity are not so much the



cause as the result of their social defects".<sup>12</sup>

An interesting story in The Mind and Face of Bolshevism by Fülp-Miller is mentioned by Lewis in Paleface. It demonstrates the way in which the fool's traditional role of privileged critic may be manipulated for political purposes. The Bolshevik revolution replaced the Tsar with a new ruler of Russia, referred to by Fülp-Miller as the "mass man". The government was supposed to be the corporate representative of the entire populace. But in an effort to maintain order the abstract "mass man" soon came to have all the qualities of the former despot, and censured even the slightest word of opposition to the establishment. Tyranny seemed stronger than ever. However, a peculiar thing occurred says Fülp-Miller:

[That] unpleasant thing the 'soul', which, in spite of all mechanization, had never been completely eradicated, and was sleeping a sleep that looked like death, suddenly woke up in a smile that lurked on the lips of someone somewhere. With this first smile at the failure of the loudly trumpeted experiments of Bolshevism began the real, the dangerous counter-revolution, for it worked in secret and gradually attained a sinister power. At first one person smiled, then others in increasing numbers. Soon the smilers united in a mystical organization and then mirth at last expanded into uncontrollable elemental laughter. This first revolt against Bolshevik oppression was the rebellion of the despairing; ever more frequently the hidden wrath became irony, ever louder swelled an uncanny mirth, which threatened to shake the very foundations of the whole structure of State authority.<sup>13</sup>

In former days the court fool had been, as Fülp-Miller sees it, the sole voice of freedom which, in a sense, represented the will of the people. The Soviets resurrected this figure, but changed his role to that of a circus clown:

It is unquestionably a proof of the cleverness of the new rulers that they, like their predecessors, recognized in time the necessity of the jester, and tried to turn aside the general secret discontent by the



re-introduction of merry councillors of this kind. Hence the solemn resurrection of the court fool, who alone was permitted to tell the truth to his masters in the midst of a crowd of trembling flatterers.<sup>14</sup>

The role of the figure, or rather figures, whom they elected to perform this necessary function, however, was confused with that of the circus clown who "from the ring amused people with malicious jokes."<sup>15</sup>

At this point it seems relevant to quote Füllöp-Miller at some length:

'Bim' and 'Bom' were the names of the two 'merry councillors' of the new tsar, the mass man; they alone among the hundred millions of Russians were granted the right to express their opinions freely; they might mock, criticize, and deride the rulers at a time when the most rigorous persecution and terrorism prevailed throughout the whole country. Bim and Bom had received a special permit from the Soviets to express openly everything which was current among the people in a secret and threatening way, and thus to provide an outlet for latent rancour. Every evening, the thousand-headed mass man, fawned upon by the whole court, sat in the circus and listened eagerly to the slanderous speeches of the two clowns Bim and Bom. In the midst of grotesque acrobatics and buffooneries, amid jokes and play, these two were allowed to utter bitter truths to which otherwise the ear of the ruler was angrily shut.

The circus in which Bim and Bom performed was crowded night after night to the farthest limits: people came from far and wide to hear Bim and Bom, who soon became star clowns. Their jokes were the daily talk of Moscow. One person told them to another, until finally the whole town knew the latest insults which these two fools had permitted themselves to make.

In the dark period of militant communism, people were particularly under the spell of the two clowns; at that time, the loose jokes to which Bim and Bom treated them with untiring energy were the one respite from the continuous pressure of force and tyranny, the only possibility of hearing open criticism and mockery of the ruler, the mass man. People abandoned themselves voluptuously to these precious moments of intellectual freedom.

In spite of their impudent criticisms, Bim and Bom were nevertheless one of the chief supports of the Bolshevik regime: the universal discontent would have burst all bounds if it had not been dissolved in harmless mirth by the two clowns. But, however biting might be the satire of Bim and Bom, the Government could rely on their never overstepping the limits of the permissible, for Bim and



Bom were completely trustworthy members of the Communist Party, and at the bottom of their hearts loyal servants of their masters. They understood how to draw the fangs of the seemingly most malicious jest before they let it loose in the ring. Their attacks were never directed against the whole, but only against details, and thus they contrived to divert attention from essentials. Besides, every one of their jokes contained a hidden warning to the laughter lovers: 'Take care: Look out, we know you! We are aware of what you are thinking and feeling!'

In this way the Bolsheviks were able to overcome a great danger, and with the help of their court fools gradually to make even wit serve their ends. But the subjects proved superior in astuteness and cunning: with quick perception, they soon saw through the designs of the tyrant and contrived to frustrate them. They purposely ignored the undertone of warning in the jokes of the clowns, abandoned themselves to the pleasure of spreading the sayings of Bim and Bom all over the place, repeated them a hundred times, and thus had no need to be afraid; they could always appeal to the authorship of the two officially patented jesters. Soon they became bolder, and in repeating these jokes added a malicious point or two of their own, for which of course responsibility was heaped on the shoulders of Bim and Bom. It was not long before hundreds of malicious quips were current, which were merely in name the products of the court fools, and were really conceived in the rebellious brain of the subjects. Anyone who wished to air a dangerous mot now prefaced it with 'Have you heard what Bim said yesterday?' and with this introduction anyone could with impunity give vent to the boldest contempt for the Soviets.

Very soon the malicious witticisms on the new ruler assumed threatening proportions; protected by the immunity enjoyed by the sayings of Bim and Bom, everybody indulged in satires that were entirely their own. If the clever tyrants thought with the help of their court fools to capture and subdue wit itself, the subjects once again proved much more cunning and provided themselves with a private joke, by ascribing their own malicious sayings to Bim and Bom. When the Soviets tried to discover the real origin of satire of this kind, one person had heard the anecdote from another and so on ad infinitum, but always linked up with some legendary utterance of Bim and Bom.

To cover their tracks completely with the authorities and avoid prosecution, the subjects as time went on hit on the idea of coupling sharp censure with every insult to the Soviets. Then one day somebody thought of adding, after some rancorous witticism ostensibly originating with the clowns, the words: 'Bim and Bom have been arrested and actually put to death for this bold utterance.' This addendum of pious reverence for the law soon became very popular and was reduced to a formula; thereafter, all anecdotes about the two clowns were followed by the words: 'They have been arrested and put to death for this — yes, really, put to death!'

In a short time the two real clowns, Bim and Bom, who performed every night in a circus with the sanction of the Government,



were lost sight of behind two mythical figures: the people had turned them into legendary heroes, who had dared to oppose the rulers freely and bravely and had paid for it with their lives. Soon nobody bothered about the real clowns who appeared daily in the circus; they were entirely forgotten. The universal interest and sympathy of the people were now felt for the imaginary figures of Bim and Bom, who, created by the resistance of an oppressed people, had bravely represented the cause of the dispossessed and sacrificed their lives for them.

Every day the worthy martyrs rise again from the dead and appear in the ring of the imagination, to express straight out to the ruling mass man the true thoughts of the real people; over and over again legend consigns them to prison and condemns them to death, and still with untiring loyalty they rise again to fulfill their lofty mission of mockery. The legendary figures of Bim and Bom, as created by the popular imagination to free it from the lowest slavery, have become more powerful than the Soviet rulers themselves; they mock at the Cheka and the prisons, for they are no longer creatures of flesh and blood, but formed from the immortal stuff of legend.<sup>16</sup>

Conscious individuals thus employed the privilege of the clown's mask to transfer responsibility for intelligent manifestations of the spirit, just as the rulers utilized the figure of the court fool to betray the trust of the people in their traditional representative, the clown. The story also illustrates that the figure of the clown remains active in the consciousness of people as the traditional symbol of the spirited expression of the human will.

#### Contemporary Interest in the Clown

Modern psychologists and philosophers continue to be attracted to the study of the multifarious nature of the clown. It is obvious that the appeal of the clown is based largely on his audience's desire for some kind of escape from the routine of a standardized existence which stifles the imaginative spirit of the individual. Claude Bragdon states that clown humour is based on an "inverted rationality" not unlike that which pertains to dreams or drunkenness.<sup>17</sup> This



observation helps to explain why the clown has so universal an appeal: "He is the dramatizer of a subjective state or level of psychic life which is itself universal, and of which everyone has had experience. 'All the world loves a lover' because we are all - potentially at least -- lovers, and all the world loves a clown because in one department of our manifold nature we are all clowns."<sup>18</sup>

The desire in everyone to break loose for a time from the logic imposed on human emotions can be enjoyed vicariously through the absurdity of the clown. George Santayana thinks that perhaps there should at times be an innocent release from the rational suppression of emotions. Since we have become so mechanistic in our behaviour we should, occasionally, condescend for a while to "play the fool" ourselves in an expression of the individual will. By turning aside from the strict order of reason we might then enter into the realm of creativity which is the domain of both the artist and the clown.<sup>19</sup>

The role of the clown almost invariably contains an element of the pathetic. Notwithstanding the violent and somewhat sadistic element that has always been associated with the clown, there seems something inherently melancholy in the makeup of a "priest of pleasure". Claude Bragdon has noted this incongruity:

The clown-image, as it exists in the popular mind is thus paradoxical, for the clown whose heart is not secretly sad underneath his motley is, to that mind, by so much less a clown. The public demands that its supreme symbol of irresponsible human joy shall be a symbol of human suffering, as is proven by such plays as Pagliacci, Debureau, He Who Gets Slapped, and Laugh, Clown, Laugh, all based on the clown-with-a-breaking-heart theme.<sup>20</sup>

The popularity of the clown in the twentieth century, as in



every age, is ascribable to numerous attitudes generated by the conditions of the times. In this context it might be well to look at Charlie Chaplin, who is undoubtedly the twentieth-century's most popular clown. Chaplin's personality has drawn to him, not only the theatre going public, but also artists and critics of human personality, among them Wyndham Lewis.

Lewis argued that Chaplin's popularity was based largely on sentimental pathos. The public was moved to self-pity when they saw the tiny figure opposed by the comparative enormity of its assailants. Lewis elaborates, in Time and Western Man, on the psychological bases of Chaplin's appeal:

In this pathos of the small — so magnificently exploited by Charlie Chaplin — the ordinary 'revolutionary' motif for crowd-consumption is not far to seek. The Keystone giants by whom, in his early films, he was always confronted, who oppressed, misunderstood and hunted him, but whom he invariably overcame, were the symbols of authority and power. Chaplin is a great revolutionary propagandist. On the political side, the pity he awakens, and his peculiar appeal to the public, is that reserved for the small man.

But no one can have seen a Chaplin film without being conscious also of something else, quite different from mere smallness. There was something much more positive than scale alone, or absence of scale, being put across, you would feel. First, of course, was the feeling that you were in the presence of an unbounded optimism (for one so small, poor and lonely). The combination of light-heartedness and a sort of scurrilous cunning, that his irresponsible epileptic shuffle gives, is overpowering. It is Pippa that is passing. God is in His Heaven; all's well with the world (of Chaplins at all events). And, secondly, you would experience the utmost confidence in your little hero's winning all his battles. The happy-ending (for the militant child-man) was foreshadowed in the awkward and stupid, lurching bulk of the Keystone giants; in the flea-like adroitness of their terrible little antagonist. It was the little skiff of Drake against the Armada over again. In brief, your hero was not only small, but very capable and very confident. Throughout he bore a charmed life.

.....  
As to the sex-side of this psychology, it would be unscientific, if you like, to forget that the feminist revolution has been in pro-



gress all around the creative activities of this great clown, throughout his career. In Chaplin the simple woman would see clearly a symbol of her little Tommy — or little Charlie — giving that great, big, arrogant, troublesome bully, Dad (even if her particular 'man' was not a good specimen of the ruling-sex), a wallop.<sup>21</sup>

The interest in Chaplin's art extended to another contemporary artist in the person of Pablo Picasso. Françoise Gilot, in a biography of Picasso, says that, "for Pablo, Chaplin's art lay essentially in the physical stylization of his 'little man' role."<sup>22</sup> But the "secret of his [Chaplin's] success", as Lewis puts it, had disappeared for Picasso by the time Chaplin made his last movie. Following his viewing of Chaplin's last movie, Limelight, Picasso said: The real tragedy...lies in the fact that Chaplin can no longer assume the physical appearance of the clown because he's no longer slender, no longer young, and no longer has the face and expression of this 'little man' but that of a man who's grown old. His body isn't really him any more. Time has conquered him and turned him into another person. And now he's a lost soul — just another actor in search of his individuality, and he won't be able to make anybody laugh.<sup>23</sup>

It is interesting in this context that Lewis, speaking about Chaplin as a "child-type", should see a similarity between Chaplin and Picasso:

I do not wish to be personal, but the subject is such a very significant one that that objection must be overridden. Picasso, then, is very small as well; with, however, a slightly napoleonic austerity lacking in Chaplin; though he has the same bright, darting, knowing eyes, the same appearance of microscopic competence. He is built on strictly infantile lines.<sup>24</sup>

Theodore Huff, in his biography of Chaplin, is particularly forcible in his praise of Chaplin as clown: "Chaplin is more than an 'actor'; he is a clown, in direct line of descent from the *Commedia dell'arte*; he is the twentieth-century counterpart of Arlequin and



Grimaldi...he is a symbol of the age, the twentieth-century Everyman."<sup>25</sup>

Adding further to the emphasis upon the all-embracing character of Chaplin's personality, Robert Payne traces the tradition upon which Chaplin's art was based back to the worship of the "great god Pan", whose name in Greek means "everything". It was said that he was fathered by all the gods and therefore he was "everyone".<sup>26</sup> Huff insists on the universality of Chaplin's appeal in the following compendium:

Chaplin is universal and timeless. To the French he is a Frenchman; to the Japanese he is one of their own. To children he is the eternal mischievous boy. To the common, underprivileged, or little man, he is their champion who somehow manages to outwit Mr. Big. To aesthetes he is the dreamer ever searching for beauty in an often ugly and cruel world — the conscience of the world. In women he appeals to their maternal instinct. For Freudians he personifies our frustrations. To left-wingers, his comedies 'protest against the crushing of the individual by social forces.'<sup>27</sup>

The widespread appeal of the character portrayed by Charlie Chaplin, the most popular clown in our age, further testifies to the conception of the figure of the clown as a conglomerate image of the wide range of human personality.

#### The Clown as Subject in Contemporary Painting

The abundance of paintings of the clown testifies to his popularity among artists, both as subject and symbol. A multitude of painters have drawn on the rich tradition of the clown in seeking to convey their own conception of the many facets of human personality. "The clown has helped to fulfill the timeless need of a container for the subtlest emotions and most tenuous reflections of man's inner



nature."<sup>28</sup> It is apparently the elasticity of his nature that has attracted so many artists and motivated them to the portrayal of his character.

Daumier was a frequent painter of clowns, many of whom represent, as in The Mountebanks at Rest, the warmth and goodness of human fellowship. "Whatever else the clown may be, he is for Daumier an authentic symbol of democracy and he is invested with Daumier's warm social sanction. His whole significance as the subject of Daumier's painting rests upon his absorption of all the homely features of average humanity whose simplicity of heart is identified with fellow-feeling."<sup>29</sup>

Picasso, particularly during his early career, has always been fascinated by clowns. When he first came to Paris he often visited the Cirque Medrano, where he delighted in the antics of the clowns. His interest, however, was centered more on the character of the clown in his private life. Although in many paintings the clown is shown in the warmth of family relationships or in the companionship of the troupe, there is nearly always a look of weariness and despondency. (See plate 1) Picasso's "rose period" clowns, apparently all of the same mold, are slender, fragile, pale, and forlorn, as though wearied by the loneliness of their existence.

It is often suggested that most artists who have taken a particular interest in clowns have done so out of a sense of identification. Phoebe Pool suggests that the painter perhaps sees in the skill of the acrobat or ballet dancer the symbol of "the discipline and struggle





Plate 1

Plate 1



with his material experienced by the painter himself."<sup>30</sup> Picasso, especially in his early years, saw the clown as a rather mysterious and romantic figure. He felt a sense of kinship with clowns because he saw them as vagrants who, like himself, were really set apart from conventional society.

With autobiographical and self-conscious symbolism, Picasso intensifies the analogy between the clown and the artist, ascribing to the Harlequins a rare sensitivity. Their delicate and finely-wrought feminine features, the exquisite and fragile tints of their flesh presuppose an ultra-refinement of thought and feeling, typical of the artist and generally foreign to the clown.<sup>31</sup>

In Picasso's painting Seated Pierrot one can see the contemplative side of the clown which associates him with the artist. (See plate 2)

Ever since the time of the great Jean-Gaspard Debureau, Pierrot, who had been a kind of anonymous zany, lost his clownish buffoon-like traits and took on a more melancholy, profound and Hamlet-like nature; he came to embody the writer or artist as onlooker and to express the sorrow lurking behind the entertainer's mask.<sup>32</sup>

Francoise Gilot speaks of Picasso's interest in the clown:

I had long realized that all his life Pablo had identified, in a symbolic way, his role — even his fate — with that of certain other solitary performers: the anonymous acrobats and tumblers whom he etched so poignantly in the Saltimbanques series; the matadors whose struggles he made his own and whose drama, whose technique even, seemed to carry over into almost every phase of his life and work.

The clown, too, with his ill-fitting costume, was for him one of the tragic and heroic figures. Almost every morning as Pablo lathered his face for shaving, he would trace with a finger in the billowing cream the enormous caricatured lips, the suggestion of a question mark over the eyebrows, and the path of tears oozing out of each eye — the stigmata of the professional clown. His makeup complete, he would begin to gesticulate and grimace with an intensity that made it clear that this was not only a game he enjoyed but, at the same time, something more.<sup>33</sup>

In The Private World of Pablo Picasso, a collection of candid photographs taken in Picasso's home, David Duncan has captured the artist





Plate 2



in various clownish "get-ups". (See plate 3)

The French painter, Bernard Buffet, has shown a great interest in the personality of the performing clown. Like his other subjects, Buffet's clowns have gaunt and emasculated countenances. The faces are elongated and the eyes wide open. They look particularly ridiculous in their costumes, and their rather perplexed expressions seem to reveal that they are fully aware of their ludicrous appearance. One gets the impression that they have been somehow forced to adopt this foolish role, and that they are embarrassed, but stupidly passive in this hopeless situation. (See plate 4) Annabel Buffet speaks of her reaction to Buffet's clowns:

Clowns! Laughter, tears...how does one react to these men with painted faces, whose function is to amuse? Children, who are easily moved to cruelty, love them. The Auguste with his great shoes and patchwork clothes, the white clown, magnificently dressed in his spangled suit, everything about them, even their strange language, fascinates children. Theirs is a dream world and we try to follow them into it.

When I was a child, clowns made me cry. I have found in Bernard's paintings an explanation for my childhood grief. The sad, lucid eyes break through the coloured masks. The lines indicate smiles, but fail to conceal the bitterness of the wrinkles. False gaiety is more depressing than real sorrow. But the show must go on!<sup>34</sup>

There is evidence also that Buffet feels some vague kinship with the circus performer. This is revealed in part by the capricious act of making himself up, in all seriousness, like a clown. (See plate 5)

The clown received the most ardent attention in the paintings of George Rouault. Here he is employed as a symbol of human degradation.





Plate 3











Like the medieval artist, with no hope for this world, he displays the profound disgrace of the life of the flesh. Fearful in their catastrophic implications, Rouault's paintings envisage his terrible despair, his pessimism so fierce that it disfigures the human form and outrages the human spirit. From the 'stained glass' style to the grotesquery of the form, the clown participates in the spirit of the early Gothic cathedral. He evokes by indirection the ethical structure of the medieval world when the fool served as a looking glass for the vanity of human pretensions.

To the medieval mind the fool represented ignominious and weak man, 'without any wysdome, one that dooeth a thing unadvisedly and without discrecion,' one who yielded to the impulse for worldly enjoyment instead of obeying devoutly the teachings of Christ. In the judgment of the most austere dogmatists these deficiencies constituted the terrible failure to achieve redemption of the soul and consigned the fool to eternal damnation. Rouault's judgment of man-the-fool is equally stern and even more desperate since he lacks the support of the religious and moral framework within which the medieval theologian worked. He has been a prophet in the wilderness, a Christian outside the fold of modern Christianity, attempting to impose a forbidding morality upon a world that will no longer accept it. He outstrips in vehemence the medieval indictment of folly and surpasses in violence the most terrifying iconography of the medieval cathedral. The absolute ugliness of his clowns originates not merely in a sense of man's folly and feebleness, but in the immediate realization of human guilt such as has been the theme of only the most relentless Christian philosophers.<sup>35</sup>

Rouault shows his clowns as "both victims of folly and creatures of sin."<sup>36</sup> In some of the later paintings, however, "the clown expresses the idea of mournful remorse, as though mankind, pained by the realization of its iniquity, bows its head in mortification."<sup>37</sup> (See plate 6)

It is interesting to observe that Rouault's paintings were the subject of an unpublished lecture prepared by Lewis about 1944. In Rouault's work Lewis found a fascinating combination of realism and mysticism. Lewis noted that "there is no avoidance of the things of everyday life: on the contrary, far from dwelling in the mystical ivory tower, as does El Greco, Rouault is up to his neck in the mire of human life."<sup>38</sup> But it is in his treatment of commonplace subjects







that Rouault reveals "the religious impulse at its maximum of creative power."<sup>39</sup>

Lewis refers to Rouault as "the painter of original sin" because of the clear and uncompromising theme of evil in his work:

So no wonder many people have misunderstood these pictures of his: seeing that the human masks he depicts have no trace of what is ingenuous, pacific, merciful or wise. The faces you see in his pictures have none of those disarming qualities. On the contrary, they are dark and merciless — packed with cruelty and craft. For they are in fact a portrait gallery of the worst of people who make life intolerable for their gentler, or at all events less professionally predatory, fellows: portraits of people whose destiny it seems to be, to pry upon and oppress the ingenuous and tragic, multitude. And for these vulpine masks of sumptuously clothed despots — in sultry scarlets and smouldering gold — there is no relief: Rouault does not show one of the faces, by way of contrast, of their more inoffensive and less alarming subjects.... The arrogant wickedness of the ruler does not, in his personae, alternate with the submissive pathos, the humbler patience, of the enslaved; perhaps, the gentle and confiding graces of those who have been too obtuse to know they are enslaved, frolicking in the yard of their prison, which they mistake for a pleasure-resort. He gives us nothing but one side of the picture, the tough side.

When we are shown a figure which is not a positive human scourge — a self-confessed despot or palpable slave-driver — the poor wretch we are then shown (who has not made the grade, so to speak, and won nefarious authority) this child of poverty and servitude is so disfigured with toil and suffering that he is in his humbler way, just as alarming as his master. He is vulpine too (as we see him — or is it her — straddled in the plate called 'Clown and Acrobat', if you ever come across any of these things). In his puny way he is accomplished an egoist as the power-blinded madman who rules him. His heart has been blackened and calloused as well as his hands.

Rouault is so obsessed with the wickedness of the great ones of this earth — the Herods, the Caesar, the "leaders" who mislead, the "protectors" who do not protect — that he seems incapable of imagining anyone being happy or graceful or kind: how could they be? for they ought, if they are not, to be forever conscious of the sinister prison and slaughter-house in which they live and have their being. 'Man is a wolf to man' is the title of one of the designs for *Miserere et Guerre*. How can man be otherwise than degraded and blasted to the bone and to the bottom of the soul by the awfulness of his servitude to evil. — And how could a 'painter of original sin' look at things otherwise than that?<sup>40</sup>

Rouault's many clowns, as well as his other subjects represent,



for Lewis, Rouault's vision of the underlying corruption of the spirit which has permeated the whole of mankind. Although Lewis does not subscribe completely to Rouault's melancholy, he feels that his paintings reflect, to a certain extent, the mood of the times:

All these figures of Rouault's are meant to be villainous. For it is villainy upon which he has his eyes fixed, to the exclusion of almost everything else. And if his friend Bloy is surprised and disgusted at encountering the scowl of an assassin where he expected to find something else, that is Bloy's fault, not Rouault's. — Since all men kill the thing they love, are they not all assassins, Rouault might have argued: for he did not believe in Bloy's pair of bourgeois turtledoves, and that is all there is to it.

His mind has its being 'en una noche oscura'. A procession of crooked magistrates, preposterous businessmen, hideous prostitutes, squalidly evil social small-fry, clowns and emperors posture and grimace before us. They stare at us stonily out of his little canvasses, with a pompous imbecility: or leer sideways at us from the corner of a bloodshot eye, in hostile disdain.

There has been nothing since monastic times quite so uncompromising, so opaquely dark. And perhaps why so many people today have turned to such images of life as these, rather than to more delectable ones, is because our present world has gradually become so unbelievably bleak, charged as it is with a hundred unresolved and brooding storms, crowding behind the particular hurricane of the moment.

War with luck, can solve many things: but there seems so very much that resists solution, or should we say shows no signs of becoming molten even in the furnace of global conflict. So what is sombre in artistic expression, in pictures or books, finds a ready echo in the conditions of the times.

As to the dark time we live in, and this causing us to register a sympathetic reaction to the dark travail of such a mind as that of Rouault, that is another matter. For although I do not believe the period produces the outlook, in the case of the artist, necessarily, yet it may cause him to find favour with his contemporaries. Among the many sorts of artists coexisting — grave and gay, forcible and insinuating — we tend to select the one who corresponds to our mood, on the same principle that we pick a phonograph record out of our collections. Rouault is the record for 'black Friday', so to say.<sup>41</sup>

Lewis felt that Rouault's paintings of clowns involve an expression of personal sentiment, and, as in the work of other painters,



a sense of identification with these figures:

The humility which is natural to Rouault is a factor of great importance, for an understanding of what he does. It accounts for his identifying himself with the 'humble' --with those who suffer rather than with those who are placed over them, and who so often forget the responsibility which is theirs, as a consequence of their station, or the wealth that society allows them to accumulate.<sup>42</sup>

Rouault himself, in a letter to Edouard Schure, spoke of his feeling of association with the clowns he painted, and of their use as a symbol for all men who go through life shielded by the synthetic disguise of the roles which they play:

For myself, ever since the end of one lovely day when the first star to shine in the sky clutched at my heart, I can't say why, unconsciously, I have derived from this instant an entire system of poetics. The gypsy wagon standing on the side of the road, the emaciated old horse grazing on the thin grass, the aging clown sitting beside his wagon mending his bright, multicolored costume -- the contrast between brilliant, scintillating things intended to amuse us, and this infinitely sad life, if one looks at it a bit objectively....Then, I expanded it all. I saw clearly that the 'clown' was myself, ourselves ...almost all of us...that this rich, spangled costume is given us by life, we're all of us clowns, more or less, we all wear a 'spangled' costume', but if we are caught unawares, the way I caught that old clown, tell me! Who would dare to claim that he is not moved to his very depths by immeasurable pity. My failing (if, indeed, it be a failing; in any case, it's a source of immense suffering for me!) is never to let anyone keep on his 'spangled costume'. King or emperor, what I want to see in the man facing me is his soul, and the more exalted his position, the more misgivings I have about his soul.<sup>43</sup>

One is perhaps reminded of King Lear who, having been gradually stripped of the artificialities of his role, tears off his clothes in a final symbolic attempt to see himself as "unsophisticated" or "unaccommodated" man, free of his "spangled costume", as Rouault might have put it. Like Lewis, Rouault sensed the fundamental ambiguity in the lives of most men, and the clown served as an obvious symbol of this absurdity.



Thus it is that among painters of the human condition as well as among artists generally, the figure of the clown has been used as a symbol for the various facets of human personality:

To the imaginative artist the clown is an abstract of humanity, as psychologically comprehensive as the thoughts, dreams, fantasies and emotions that compose the intricate web of man's inner life. From one point of view his good humor signifies natural human virtue. From another point of view his irresponsible nature suggests unmeasured release from our treadmill existence. From still another point of view the clown's transgressions of accepted behaviour may be seen as the symbol of human weakness and error. Like a many-faceted crystal, the clown presents a new face every time he is turned, and out of the raw material of his infinitely variable nature artists have fashioned a symbol which reveals their profound meditations about life.<sup>44</sup>



## CHAPTER TWO

### THE VARIETY OF CLOWN FIGURES IN THE WORKS OF WYNDHAM LEWIS

#### The Professional Clown

Lewis was fascinated by the personality of the clown as a professional performer and by the relationship of the clown to the audience. Both the role and the response he explored in a story which first appeared as "Les Saltimbanques" in 1909 in The English Review, and was re-written as "The Cornac and His Wife" for inclusion in The Wild Body (1928). The later version, which contains much additional comment on the role of the clown, the psychological makeup of the audience, and the sources of humour, reveals Lewis's renewed interest in the figure of the clown when he was writing Childermass (1928).

The story is a description of a circus performance attended by the narrator of The Wild Body stories, Ker-Orr. It is a shrewd analysis of a complex series of relationships: the antagonisms and solidarity of the members of the small troupe, their attitude to the public they serve for a price, the relationship between the cornac (as the Breton showman is called) and the clown.

The cornac, that is the ringmaster, and his wife look upon their audience with contempt and a sense of oppression. Their self-pity is evident in the frequent displays of affection toward their children, whom they wish to shelter from the assumed ill-treatment of a public, which for them is the world at large. One is reminded of some



of Picasso's paintings in the Saltimbanque series which, reflecting the melancholy existence of these nomads, focus on the mutual feelings of tenderness born of their isolation and misery.

The cornac and his family, as the narrator Ker-Orr observes, think of themselves as isolated from and opposed to "the Public" which, in their estimation, is a sort of "vast beast" with a simple but perverse character, differing from any separate man's, but marked collectively by "a deeply-rooted taste for outdoor performances of a particularly depressing and disagreeable nature."<sup>1</sup> Ker-Orr detects, he thinks, a sadistic desire on the part of the audience to see the entire family break their necks or be destroyed by some such misfortune. The bitter realization of this collective emotion encourages the saltimbanques to feign as much pain as possible to appease the perverted desires of the audience:

These displays involved the insane contortions of an indignant man and his dirty, breathless wife, of whose ugly misery it was required that a daily mournful exhibition should be made of her shrivelled legs, in pantomime hose. She must crucify herself with a scarecrow abandon, this iron and blood automaton, and affect to represent the factor of sex in a geometrical posturing. These spells were all related in some way to physical suffering. Whenever one of these monsters was met with, which on an average was twice a day, the only means of escape for the unfortunate family was to charm it. Conduct involving that never failed to render the monster harmless and satisfied. They then would hurry on, until they met another. Then they would repeat just the same thing over again, and once more hasten away, boiling with resentment.<sup>2</sup>

Because of their well established roles, both the ringmaster or showman and the public seem to understand each other to a certain extent:

Producer and consumer both were bestially conscious of the passage of coppers from one pocket to another. The public lay back and enjoyed



itself hardly, closely, and savagely. The showman contorted himself madly in response. His bilious eye surveyed its grinning face, his brow sweated for its money, his ill-kept body ached. He made it a painful spectacle; he knew how to make it painful. He had the art of insisting on the effort, that foolish effort. The public took it in the contrary spirit, as he felt, on purpose. It was on purpose, as he saw it, that it took its recreation, which was coarse. It deliberately promoted his misery and affected to consider him a droll gay bird.

So this by no means exceptional family took its lot: it dressed itself up, its members knocked each other about, tied their bodies in diabolical knots before a congregation of Hodges, who could not even express themselves in the metropolitan tongue, but gibbered in breton, day in, day out. That was the situation. Intimately, both Showman and Public understood it, and were in touch more than, from the outside, would be at once understood.<sup>3</sup>

Willson Disher speaks of circus clowns as formidable psychologists.<sup>4</sup> To these "amusement merchants", as he calls them, humanity is merely a mass of starved primary emotions which may be controlled by reason in the solitary mind, but which is unchecked in the human herd. Disher recalls a show at Waterford in 1925 in which a man was performing the trick of sawing a woman in half. The trick went wrong when the box suddenly fell open so that the woman was discovered huddled in one end. The audience, instead of laughing with satisfaction at having discovered an illusionist's secret or sympathizing with the woman who burst into tears, rose in their seats shouting insults and charges of fraud against the producer.

The performance witnessed by Ker-Orr involved in part a contest in the form of a brisk dialogue between the people's favorite, the clown, who traditionally represented them, and his melancholy master, the cornac or showman, their enemy. In the initial act the clown has the dominating part. He displays his apparent wit by



insolent quips directed at the showman, and receives for each of these a resounding slap for his impertinence. Ker-Orr is very much taken by the showman or "proprietor" as he calls him here:

The proprietor was astonishing. I rubbed my eyes. This lugubrious personage had woken to the sudden violence of a cheerful automaton. In administering the chastisement his irrepressible friend perpetually invited, he sprang nimbly backwards and forwards as though engaged in a boxing match, while he grinned appreciatively at the clown's wit, as though in spite of himself, nearly knocking his teeth out with repeated blows. The audience howled with delight, and every one seemed really happy for the moment, except the clown.<sup>5</sup>

Ker-Orr describes the traditional role of the showman. The part has a unique psychology of its own, he says, consisting not only in inventing posers for the clown, but also in turn being the butt against whom the laugh is always directed. The showman's physical superiority is always indisputable, for the clowns never attack him in spite of the innumerable slaps he may administer to them. He is usually dressed in evening clothes. As a result he is a far more absurd figure than his garish opponent. Nevertheless, it may be, Ker-Orr speculates, "the clown's superstitious respect for rank, and this emblem of it, despite his consciousness of intellectual superiority, that causes this ruffianly dolt to remain immune."<sup>6</sup>

Gilbert Seldes describes "the august", as this stock figure of the European circus is sometimes called, as a man of great dignity who parleys with the clowns and is the butt of their jokes. He is also a rather good tumbler, since it is part of the Medrano tradition for the audience to hiss him until he feigns fury and turns a number of difficult sommersaults around the ring. The famous Fratellini



family of the Cirque Medrano in Paris operated with the realization that violence is a source of laughter for the audience, and they incorporated this element into their act. Seldes describes one scene in which "the august" is invited to have his picture taken by the three clowns. In their enthusiastic preparations they repeatedly drop the tripod on his foot. He grows suspicious of their intentions and makes several attempts to withdraw, but each time is brought back by force. The audience senses the good will of the clowns and the obstinacy of the august. An atmosphere of hostility is built up as he becomes more obstinate and they become equally insistent. The clowns finally conclude that there is nothing else for them to do but attack. They hurl themselves upon him in a frenzy of destructiveness, tearing him (his evening clothes) limb from limb. Although there is always a play of motive and a hidden logic, Seldes says, the appeal is, nevertheless, basically violent.<sup>7</sup>

Ker-Orr elaborates further on the psychology of the showman's role:

In playing this part the pompous dignity of attitude should be preserved in the strictest integrity. The actor should seldom smile. If so, it is only as a slight concession, a bid to induce the clown to take a more serious view of the matter under discussion. He smiles to make it evident that he also is furnished with this attribute of man —a discernment of the ridiculous. Then, with renewed gusto and solemnity, he asks the clown's serious opinion of the question by which he seems obsessed, turning his head sideways with his ear towards his droll friend, and closing his eyes for a moment.

Or else it is the public for whom this smile is intended, and towards whom the discomfited 'swell' in evening dress turns as towards his peers, for sympathy and understanding, when 'scored off' anew, in, as the smile would affirm, this low-bred and unanswerable fashion. They are appealed to, as though it were their mind that was being represented in the dialogue, and constantly discomfited, and he were



merely their mouthpiece.

Originally, no doubt, this throaty swell stood in some sense for the Public. Out of compliment to the Public, of course, he would be provided with evening dress. It would be tacitly understood by the courteous management, that although many of those present were in billycocks, blouses and gaiters, shawls and reach-me-downs, their native attire was a ceremonial evening outfit.

The distinguished Public would doubtless still further appreciate the delicacy of touch in endowing its representative with a high-born inability to understand the jokes of his inferiors, or be a match for them in wit. In the better sort of circus, his address is highly genteel, throaty and unctuous.<sup>8</sup>

Having discussed the intricacies of the showman's customary role, Ker-Orr distinguishes the particular showman of the small rural circus of which he is currently a witness. The part is a very lonely one, he notes, since "there are none of those appeals to the Public — as the latter claim, not only community of mind, but of class, with the clown", the situation "becoming like a dialogue between mimes, representing employer and employee, although these original distinctions are not very strictly observed."<sup>9</sup>

The showman's role usually reveals, Ker-Orr states, an absence of a sense of humour. He finds himself in the company of one (the clown), "whose mischievous spirit he is aware of, and whose ridicule he fears."<sup>10</sup> In an apparent effort to regain his dignity and to appear entertaining to the crowd, he searches his brain for conundrums in order to nonplus the clown. These provide the clown with a further opportunity to display his wit. Such is the normal type of exchange between the players of these two roles.

In the scene witnessed by Ker-Orr, however, a strange reversal of role begins to take place. As previously stated, the showman is



isolated from the affections of this rural audience because of their affinity with the clown. Therefore, in an attempt to encroach on the comradeship extended the clown by allying himself more with the audience, the showman shows an unusual vitality and wit. He begins to get the better of the clown and to usurp his role, since the latter's stock replies are no match for this "unusual display of strange but genuine hilarity."<sup>11</sup> During this particular evening the showman was, says Ker-Orr, "rather 'hors de son assiette'."<sup>12</sup>

Just as the actions of those in the spotlight normally conform to the dictates of their roles, the actions of the other party to the performance, the audience, are equally established and predictable. As has been mentioned, the audience is essentially one in character. They are "herded to their amusements like children", pay for their entertainment, and receive it "like the daily soup and weekly cube of tobacco of the convict."<sup>13</sup> It is a thoughtless routine for them, and when they receive a reprimand from the proprietress for their stinginess they accept it as coming from a person in authority, just as they would a brow-beating in their daily work. Their comic sense is also subject to the narrowest convention of habit. Thus, if the clown and showman were to concoct in their hearing the next joke, they would admit it with the same enthusiasm. They respond automatically to these amusements as though they were a part of the manifestations of Fate, "one of which is comic, one of love, one of work, and so on."<sup>14</sup>

On this unusual evening, however, still another reversal occurs when a small boy begins jeering at the showman. His spontaneous attack



growing in intensity, outrages the showman who threatens to chastise this new clown as he would his stock opponent:

He rubbed his hands as he was accustomed to do before chastizing the clown. Here was a little white-faced clown, an unprofessional imp of mischief! He would slap him in a moment. He rubbed his horny hands but without conviction. This had no effect: the small voice went steadily on like a dirge. This unrehearsed number found him at a loss.<sup>15</sup>

The perplexed showman goes over to the clown for assistance in this novel situation. The clown, supposing the disturbance to be the work of some disorderly clod, advances toward the source of the disruption in order to issue a rebuke:

But when he saw who was the offender, finding a thoughtful-looking little boy in place of an intoxicated peasant, he was as nonplussed as had been his master. He looked foolishly round, and then fell to jeering back, the clown reasserting itself. Then he returned with a shrug and grimace to his preparations for the next and final event.<sup>16</sup>

Ker-Orr speculates on the possible explanations for this extraordinary outbreak. The boy may have patronized such shows for the purpose of heckling the showman, displaying his intelligence, or becoming a clown:

But he may have been the victim of the unaccountable awakening of a critical vein, grown irresponsibly active all at once. If the latter, then he was launched on a dubious career of offence. He had one of the handsome visionary breton faces. His oracular vehemence, though bitterly sarcastic, suggested the more romantic kind of motivation. The showman prowled about the enclosure, grinning and casting sidelong glances at his poet: his vanity tickled in some fashion, perhaps: who knows? the boy persevering blandly, fixing him with his eye. But suddenly his face would darken, and he would make a rush at the inexplicable juvenile figure. Would this boy have met death with the exultation of a martyr rather than give up his picture of an old and despondent mountebank — like some stubborn prophet who would not forego the melodrama forged by his orderly hatreds — always of the gloom of famine, of cracked and gutted palaces, and the elements taking on new and extremely destructive shapes for the extermination of man?<sup>17</sup>



Finally the show ends and "that organism 'the Public', as there constituted", falls to pieces at a signal and disperses.<sup>18</sup> "There had been two Publics, however, this time. It had been a good show."<sup>19</sup>

Lewis's interest in the event which he describes in this story, apart from his observations on the curious relationship of performers and audience, is centered on the startling situation that occurs when suddenly a genuine personality comes to the surface, almost by accident, from beneath the role or mask within which it is normally contained. The showman, suddenly dissatisfied with the part he has been forced to assume, makes a display of intelligence that momentarily disrupts the show. And, similarly, the boy's consciousness spontaneously erupts from the darkness of his anonymous crowd-personality to jolt the mechanical operation of this almost ritualistic performance. For Lewis this is indeed a "good show"!

Further reflection might suggest that perhaps the boy's actions represent for Lewis the artist's role as the objective observer and critic of society, standing apart from the crowd and at the same time opposed to the "crowd-masters" — those dissemblers who exploit and even encourage the obtuseness of the common man who fails to discern the incongruity between appearance and reality. Lewis deals with this problem manifestly in other works, such as The Art of Being Ruled, and once again in an imaginative way in Childermass. As he recalls in Rude Assignment, he continued in all his subsequent work to develop the thinking he had begun when he made notes for the stories in The Wild Body:



My literary career began in France, in the sense that my first published writings originated in notes made in Brittany. Indeed, this period in retrospect, responsible for much, is a blank with regard to painting....But what I started to do in Brittany I have been developing ever since. Out of Bestre and Brotcotnaz grew, in that sense —if in no other — the aged 'Gossip Star' at her toilet, and Percy Hardcaster. Classifiable I suppose as 'satire', fruits of much visceral and intellectual travail and indolent brooding, a number of pieces were eventually collected under the title of 'The Wild Body'.<sup>20</sup>

#### The Common Man as Clown

In the fifteenth century Caxton said: "There ben more fooles than wyseman." In the twentieth century Lewis suggests the situation has failed to improve. "Life today", he says, "is giddily frank, and the fool is everywhere serene and blatant. Human insanity has never flowered so colossally, or at least the stupid has never before had it quite so much its own way."<sup>21</sup> In The Caliph's Design he says that "since the beginning of time the imbecile has been the rule, the intelligent the exception."<sup>22</sup> And in an article dealing with modern art and architecture Lewis speaks of "our fundamental humanity" as "a rugged conglomerate, a thoroughly conservative mass — stable, if deadly stupid."<sup>23</sup> But, Lewis asserts, it is on the basis of this substratum and out of it that the new insight must come if it is to come at all.

Lewis arrived at his views of society partly through his observations of the events of World War I. In Blasting and Bombardiering he recalls that the war was a "political education":

I, along with millions of others, was standing up to be killed. Very well: but who in fact was it, who was proposing to kill or maim me? I developed a certain inquisitiveness upon that point. I saw clearly that it was not my German opposite number. He, like myself, was an



instrument. That we were all on a fool's errand had become plain to many of us....<sup>24</sup>

Lewis complained that such events occur because of the almost limitless credulity of the common man, who fails to comprehend the full import of what is happening.

Certainly I understand that all wars are promoted and directed by knaves, for their own unpleasant ends, at the expense of fools, their cannonfodder. And certainly knaves are bad men, very bad men. But the greatest wickedness of all — if we must deal in moral values — is the perpetration of foolishness which these carnivals of mass-murder involve.<sup>25</sup>

Part of the explanation for the persistence of such mass stupidity is to be found through examination of the nature of that peculiar animal "the crowd". Most sociologists seem to agree that the crowd has a personality of its own. Martin Conway states that man the individual and man the crowd unit are two totally different creatures, that "the opinion of the crowd is by no means determined by any general concurrence of individual minds."<sup>26</sup> And Gustave Le Bon, in his classic study of mass psychology, says that the "substitution of the unconscious action of crowds for the conscious activity of individuals is one of the principle characteristics of the present age."<sup>27</sup>

In "The Crowd Master" Lewis invents a persona, Cantleman, who examines the crowds which gathered in London prior to the first world war. "The Crowd", Cantleman says, is the "first mobilization of a country....It serpentine every night in thick well nourished coils, all over town, in tropic degustation of news and 'stimung'."<sup>28</sup> He also sees how "THE POLICE with distant icy contempt herd London."<sup>29</sup> As the war approached, he recalled later in Blasting and Bombardiering,



"the Crowd" was still in its "habitual infantile sleep."<sup>30</sup> He saw how easy it had been to mobilize the crowd into an unconscious force: Men resist death with horror, it is true, when their time comes. But death is only a form of crowd. It is a similar surrender. Does not the crowd in life spell death, when most intensely marshalled? The Crowd is an immense anaesthetic towards death, such is its im-memorial function.<sup>31</sup>

In Blasting and Bombardiering Lewis describes the preparations for war in England in a particularly sardonic tone. He shows the almost universal failure to consider the event in an intelligent way even though existence itself was in jeopardy. The mobilization had for the crowd all the quality of a happening. "Human life could not be serious if it tried", he reflects.<sup>32</sup> The time of preparation for the impending invasion was a "gay carnival of fear": "Everything was going to be delightfully different...., What a change an invasion would be! Back to William the Conqueror! The exciting novelties fore-shadowed pleased everybody, such a delicious earthquake made children of the party....<sup>33</sup> The Art of Being Ruled also contains a bitter passage in which Lewis parodies the mindless attitude of the common man with regard to war. Here Lewis dramatically creates the voice of the crowd-master abusing the crowd for events to which it has responded unconsciously and therefore irresponsibly:

'So now you've been and gone and killed fifteen million of yourself, have you?' the Profiteer might have asked him in 1918. 'Well, you are a silly fellow! still, you would do it, you bloodthirsty, homicidal devil! - I can't stop you! There's no holding you in when you see red, is there? Ah, well! you rule yourself, thank goodness for that - or you might start blaming me for it! But I suppose after all a bit



of a scrap does you no harm occasionally! Boys will be boys! I'm glad I'm not your father! I shouldn't like to be responsible for such a high-spirited, fiery, tigerish devil as you! Straight I wouldn't!'

And poor 'Mankind' in his concrete form of the plain man — mutilated, bankrupt, and brutalized — would have looked at that genial, 'kindly' face, with its merry pickwickian twinkle and plausible tongue (not a bit proud! a self-made fellow, evidently! good luck to him!), with a 'grim' smile, and would think to himself, 'Yes, I am a bit of a devil!'<sup>34</sup>

Although Lewis does comment on the behaviour of the crowd as a single personality, he does not usually seem to draw such a marked distinction between the mentality of man in and out of the crowd. His estimation of the common man as clown or fool applies in both instances, since in either case it is merely a group personality that is expressed. In The Caliph's Design, for instance, he says:

The life of the crowd, of the Plain Man, is external: he can live only through others and outside himself. Then he, in a sense, is the houses, the railings, the statues, the churches, the roadhouses. His beauty and justification is in the superficial life of all that he sees. He dwindle, grows restless and sick, when not given the opportunities to live and enjoy in the simple, communal manner.<sup>35</sup>

In The Art of Being Ruled Lewis speaks of the "doctrine of What the Public Wants". According to this doctrine the public is considered, by an adept of this dogma, a "stupid mass of infantiles" who claim, however, to be intelligent beings. The vanity of the public is met in every field, and the rule for success is that in the quality of what is presented to the masses "you cannot aim too low".<sup>36</sup> "It is not only impossible to exaggerate — it in itself requires a trained publicist to form any idea of — the idiocy of the Public."<sup>37</sup> Lewis sees modern man as a puppet, having no imaginative life of his own and being content, like the crowd at the Cornac's circus, to be merely an



unconscious spectator. If any member of the crowd were asked to express his personality it would be found that it was a "group personality" he was expressing — a pattern imposed on him by education, television, movies, radio and press. He has, in fact, no personality at all. This anonymity is, however, precisely what the modern man desires. There is a profound desire to be ruled, to be "looked after, disciplined into insensitiveness, spared from suffering by insensibility and blind dependence on a will superior to their own."<sup>38</sup>

Eric Fromm, in the forward to the 1941 edition of Escape From Freedom, supports Lewis's observations regarding man's tendency to seek anonymity, and offers his own explanation of this phenomenon.

It is the thesis of this book that modern man, freed from the bonds of pre-individualist society, which simultaneously gave him security and limited him, has not gained freedom in the positive sense of the realization of his individual self; that is, the expression of intellectual, emotional and sensuous potentialities. Freedom, though it has brought him independence and rationality, has made him isolated and, thereby, anxious and powerless. This isolation is unbearable and the alternatives he is confronted with are either to escape from the burden of his freedom into new dependencies and submission, or to advance to the full realization of positive freedom which is based upon the uniqueness and individuality of man.<sup>39</sup>

In the forward to the 1965 edition of Escape From Freedom, Fromm reiterates his earlier contention: "There can be no doubt that in this last quarter of a century the reasons for man's fear of freedom, for his anxiety and willingness to become an automaton, have not only continued but have greatly increased."<sup>40</sup>

Few people want to be "free" in the sense of becoming intelligent, freely-expressive individuals, Lewis felt, for men choose rather, to live "conventionally" as types, according to some cliche



and pitiful countenance that the girl intercedes to protect him with a maternal embrace and the words "He's only a child."

The promotion of a child-like attitude is obviously of great advantage to those who would be leaders of the masses. To "make everyone 'like unto little children'" is an effective way of "disposing of them" and thus is part of the solution to the problem of power.<sup>44</sup> The doctrine of "What the Public Wants" involves considering the public, as the Bailiff does in Childermass (Book I of Lewis's trilogy The Human Age) — as a stupid mass of children devoid of anything but a group personality which is in fact what they desire and what they achieve when gathered together in the camp. 'Childermass' is in itself an extremely apt title for this work. In the first place it alludes to the feast commemorating the slaughter of the innocents. 'Mass' suggests a compact body of human beings, an aggregate in which individuality is lost, a body of matter or raw material for moulding, in short, human plastic. The word suggests the type of being encountered by Pullman and Satters in the camp:

Those they meet in the same situation as themselves are from every class and of all ages but tend to a uniformity that is strictly passionel and that confers upon them the cachet of a social class. Their class-life dominates them so that their responses to alien stimulus would be impersonal class-responses, or such as are proper to their prescribed function. Thus some would respond as the aggressive squaw-men that are highly intelligent, armed to the teeth with the tongue mainly but very fierce, and some as the female of the species, either adventurous or domesticated, whose fierceness is variable, as shy as doves or as bold as musk-rats, but in every instance responding truly as disciplined units of the great and prosperous hominy class.<sup>45</sup>

In Monstre Gai (Book II of The Human Age) Mannock suggests



that the Third City itself is "an institution for the preservation and glorification of mediocrity."<sup>46</sup> On a visit to the bank Pullman finds it "crawling with that type of citizen" inhabiting the Third City. "To see them all here in the place where the funds originated to maintain them in idleness and idiocy was an almost frightening spectacle of subsidized futility. Was there ever so irresponsible a dole!"<sup>47</sup>

A constant source of irritation to Lewis was his belief that any intelligent progress in the arts will never be achieved as long as institutions such as the Royal Academy, which cater to the dull conservatism of society are influencing the standards. The occasion of the rejection of his portrait of T.S. Eliot prompted one particularly bitter outcry against this school which he probably had in mind when he tagged the Third City "an institution for the preservation and glorification of mediocrity":

The Royal Academy is the snobbish symbol of British indifference to the arts of painting, sculpture, architecture and design. It is how our particular plutocracy expresses its patronizing contempt for the things of the mind when those things take a visual form. So long as that crushing and discouraging symbol of malignant and arrogant mediocrity is there, a good artist in England will be an outcast — a rebel, as it is called.<sup>48</sup>

Lewis's attack therefore was not centered wholly on the condition of the dull masses, but directed as well at the leaders of society for the perpetration of folly which in turn could lead only to enslavement by some crowd-master.

Lewis was not slow to realize that in the new machine-oriented world machines were human extensions and patterned on natural geometrics. "The danger, as it would appear at present, and in our first



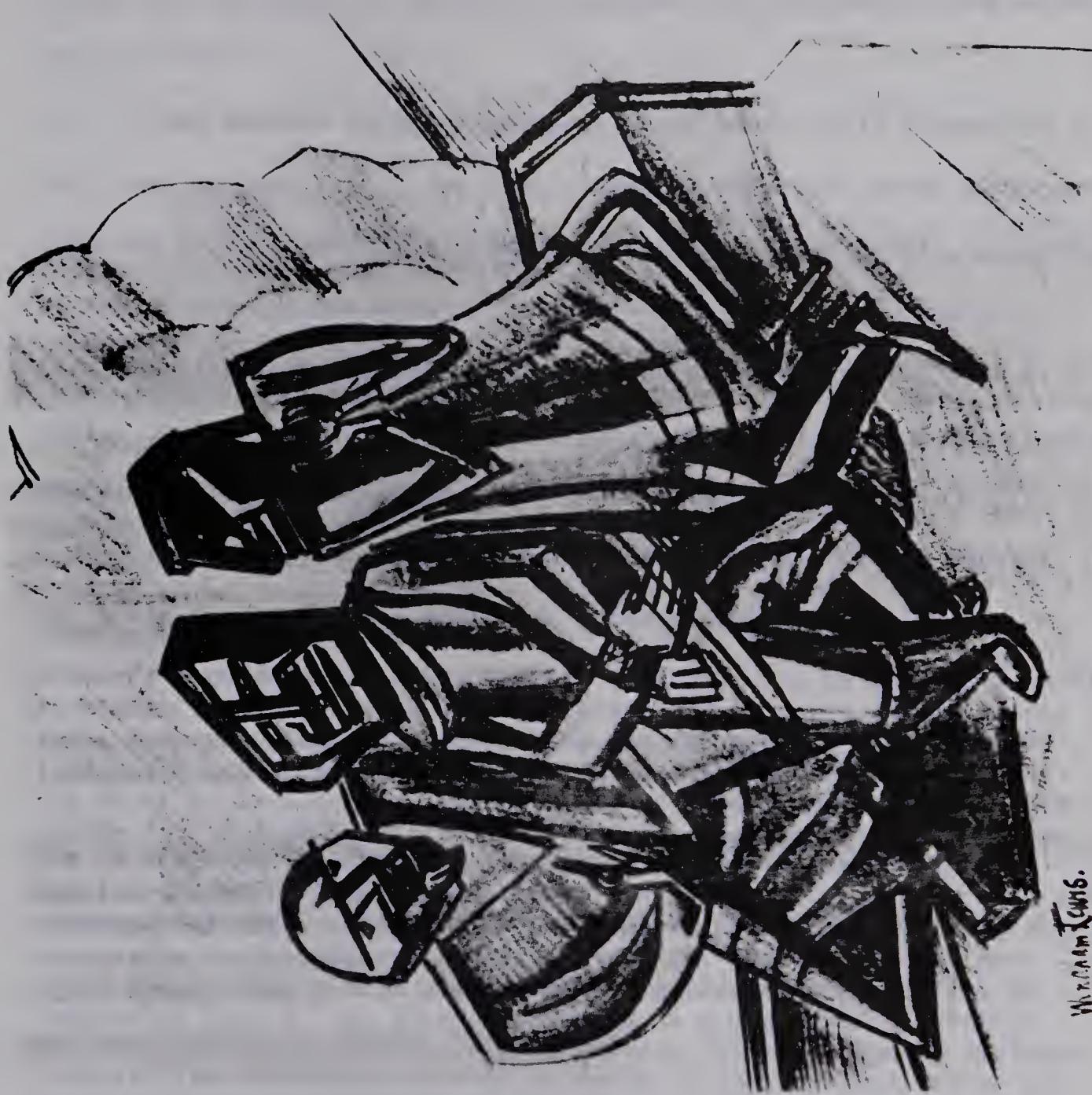
flight of substitution and remounting", he observed in 1919, "is evidently that we should become overpowered by our creation, and become as mechanical as a tremendous insect world, all our awakened reason entirely disappeared."<sup>49</sup> Like the continental painters before the war, the Vorticists in England had concentrated on the essential forms of nature in their representation of particular objects. These basic forms, which they saw as geometric and mechanical, were the centre of interest rather than the peculiarities of the subject itself. In The Caliph's Design, Lewis said: "Every living form is a miraculous mechanism, and every sanguinary, vicious or twisted need produces in Nature's workshop a series of mechanical gadgets extremely suggestive and interesting for the engineer, and almost invariably beautiful or interesting for the artist."<sup>50</sup> The danger inherent in the situation, however, is suggested in Lewis's drawing "The Three Philosophers" which shows a group of three figures, one of them a caricature of Lenin, the other two like animalic and amiable machines who appear to advance at his bidding or under his direction. (See plate 7)

From the time of his earlier stories, some dating back to 1909, Lewis focused his attention on the outside of man, the mechanical side of his nature. However this interest began, it became an integral and marked characteristic of Lewis's satiric technique!

In Satire and Fiction Lewis speaks of Hazlitt's complaint that Ben Johnson's characters are "'like machines, governed by mere routine....'" "But", Lewis replies, "what else is a character of satire but that? Is it not just because they are such machines, governed by



William Morris.





routine — or creatures that stagnate, as it were 'in a leaden cistern' — that the satirist, in the first instance has considered them suitable for satire?"<sup>51</sup>

The stories in The Wild Body, which Lewis calls "essays in a new human mathematic",<sup>52</sup> are really studies of people whose lives are governed by an unconscious mechanical routine. Such people, according to Lewis, make up the bulk of society — "the majority, of machine-like, restless and hard individuals, who positively rattle with a small, hollow, shaken ego; or, less objectionably, throb and purr with the present vibration of a plodding and complacent mechanism."<sup>53</sup>

Lewis explains in part the theory upon which these stories are based in the chapter entitled "Inferior Religions":

A man is made drunk with his boat or restaurant as he is with a merry-go-round: only it is the staid, everyday drunkenness of the normal real, not easy always to detect. We can all see the ascendancy a 'carousal' has on men, driving them into a set narrow intoxication. The wheel at Carisbrooke imposes a set of movements upon the donkey inside it, in drawing water from the well, that it is easy to grasp. But in the case of a hotel or fishing-boat, for instance, the complexity of the rhythmic scheme is so great that it passes as open and untrammelled life. This subtle and wider mechanism merges, for the spectator, in the general variety of nature. Yet we have in most lives the spectacle of a pattern as circumscribed and complete as a theorem of Euclid. So these are essays in a new human mathematic. But they are, each of them, simple shapes, little monuments of logic. I should like to compile a book of forty of these propositions, one deriving from and depending on the other. A few of the axioms for such a book are here laid down.<sup>54</sup>

The subjects of these stories are thus people whose lives are strictly mechanical. Their daily existence is a secular ritual, which Lewis sees as a kind of "inferior religion":

I would present these puppets, then, as carefully selected specimens of religious fanaticism. With their attendant objects or fetishes



they live and have a regular food and vitality. They are not creations, but puppets. You can be as exterior to them, and live their life as little, as the showman grasping from beneath and working about a Polichinelle. They are only shadows of energy, not living beings. Their mechanism is a logical structure and they are nothing but that.<sup>55</sup>

The narrator of the stories in The Wild Body is, as I have said, Ker-Orr, who travels about the country seeking out and examining human specimens caught up in the whirl of their own particular fanatical religions. He first visits a hotel at Bayonne, and once inside he feels he has entered a self-contained universe. The operation of the hotel, like that of a merry-go-round, keeps the men and women involved in an unconscious pirouette from morning till night. Ker-Orr makes the acquaintance of a "pseudo-American" who hailed from the southern part of France. His americanism, Ker-Orr points out, had come to him "as a revelation when youth had already passed." He now repents sincerely of "his misguided early nationality."<sup>56</sup> The adopted "americanism" is his fetish and he plays the part to the utmost of his very limited capability. Ker-Orr finally succeeds in removing the mask of this actor and in celebrating his triumph.

Travelling to Beau Sejour, Ker-Orr meets Zoborov, whose efforts are directed toward promoting "a very powerful impression of his independence."<sup>57</sup> He attempts, Ker-Orr observes, to "hypnotize you with his isolation".<sup>58</sup> Ker-Orr encounters several other people and for several days witnesses their ridiculous circumvolutions about the hotel of Mademoiselle Perronette.



The next subject of his observation, Bestre, is an "eternal watchdog", who employs his eye to disarm those whom he encounters in an odd sort of battle in which his object is to draw attention to his own luscious body. "He gazes at a new acquaintance as though this poor man, without guessing it, were entering a world of astonishing things!"<sup>59</sup> Bestre is thrilled when meeting a stranger because he can perform various groups of "tricks", as Ker-Orr calls them, such as creating a mysterious air of intimacy with his customer. His interest in a "fresh face and an enemy" is short-lived, however, and his interest soon dies down, "whether you have assimilated him or not. He only gives you about a day for your meal. He then assumes you have finished him, and he feels chilled by your scheduled disillusion."<sup>60</sup>

Bestre's preoccupation with his body and his tactics in drawing attention to himself constitute his peculiar fetish. Ker-Orr describes the workings of this "eye-man":

I had arrived at the master-moment of one of Bestre's campaigns. These were long and bitter affairs. But they consisted almost entirely of dumb show. The few words that passed were generally misleading. A vast deal of talking went on in the different camps. But a dead and pulverizing silence reigned on the field of battle, with few exceptions.

It was a matter of who could be most silent and move least: it was a stark stand-up fight between one personality and another, unaided by adventitious muscle or tongue. It was more like phases of a combat or courtship in the insect-world. The Eye was really Bestre's weapon: the ammunition with which he loaded it was drawn from all the most skunk-like provender, the most ugly mucins, fungoid glands, of his physique.<sup>61</sup>

In "Franciscan Adventures" Ker-Orr comes upon another fetishist, this time a French vagabond obsessed by his professed musical talents: I examined this old song-bird with scorn. Monotonous passion, stereotyped into a frenzied machine, he irritated me like an aimlessly



howling wind. Had I been sitting with the wind, however, I should not have felt scorn. He was at the same time elemental and silly, that was the reason. What emotions had this automaton experienced before he accepted outcast life? In the rounded personality, known as Father Francis, the answer was neatly engraved. The emotions provoked by the bad, late, topical sentimental songs of Republican France. You could get no closer answer than that, and it accounted completely for him. He had become their disreputable embodiment. In his youth the chlorotic heroine of the popular lyrical fancy must have been his phantom mate. He became her ideal, according to the indications provided by the lying ballad. So he would lose touch more and more with unlyricized reality, which would in due course vomit him into the outcast void. That was the likeliest story of this shell I had arrested and attracted in here to inspect.<sup>62</sup>

Ker-Orr's final encounter is with the alcoholic Madame Brotcotnaz, a claret-colored "bloated shell" who receives regular beatings from her husband, Nicholas. The beatings are given out almost impartially, it would seem, and received with an equal amount of compliancy as part of an inevitable and routine destiny. Ker-Orr arrives "the morning after a beating" to find Julie in her usual condition: "Julie lying seriously battered upon their bed, or sitting rocking herself quietly in the débit, her head a turban of bandages, he noiselessly attends to her wants, enquires how she feels, and applies remedies. It is like a surgeon and a patient, an operation having just been successfully performed."<sup>63</sup> In the chapter "Inferior Religions" Lewis refers to Nicholas' "fascination" with Julie as though she were a fetish:

He bangs up against it wildly at regular intervals, blackens it, contemplates it, moves round it and dreams. He reverences it: it is his task to kill it. All such fascination is religious. The damp napkins of the inn-keeper are the altar-cloths of his rough illusion, as Julie's bruises are the markings upon an idol....<sup>64</sup>

Ker-Orr on his next visit finds Julie's arm in a sling and her



foot bandaged, but this time her injuries have been suffered in Nicholas' absence. The report of her injuries is a shock to Nicholas:

[He] whom I was always accustomed to see master of the situation was stunned and changed, like a man not yet recovered from some horrid experience. He, the recognized agent of Fate, was usually so above the mêlée. Now he looked another man, like somebody deprived of a coveted office, or from whom some privilege had been withheld.<sup>65</sup>

And so the news of Julie's accident brings on a fit of jealousy, shocking Nicholas out of his thoughtless routine into a momentary awareness of a being other than his usual self, one with which he then struggles:

All his wild jealousy surges up. A cause, a rival cause, is incarnated in his excited brain, and goes in an overbearing manner to claim its effect. In a second a man is born. He does not credit him, but he gets a foothold just outside of reason. He is a rival! - another Brotcotnaz; all his imagination is sickened by this super-Brotcotnaz, as a woman who has been delivered of some hero, already of heroic dimension, might naturally find herself. A moment of great weakness and lassitude seizes him. He remains powerless at the thought of the aggressive actions of this hero. His mind succumbs to torpor, it refuses to contemplate this figure.

It was at this moment that some one must have told him the actual cause of the injuries. The vacuum of his mind, out of which all the machinery of habit had been momentarily emptied, filled up again with its accustomed furniture. But after this moment of intense void the furniture did not quite resume its old positions, some of the pieces never returned, there remained a blankness and desolate novelty in the destiny of Brotcotnaz.<sup>66</sup>

These stories are thus a few imaginative illustrations of the "fascinating imbecility of the creaking men-machines", obsessed by one or more objects of attraction in a "savage worship". Such behaviour, according to Lewis, is characteristic of the "mindless masses", the "fooliaminy" who make up our stolid and routine society. Individually these machines are amiable or harmless enough, mobilized as Lewis saw them mobilized on the evening of the First World War they



suggest the possibility of a menacing insect corporation - the extension and tool of a crowd-master or executive intelligence.

#### The Individual as Clown

The individual, the eccentric personality who fails to conform to the thoughtless herd of clowns or fooliaminy who make up, in Lewis's estimation, the bulk of society, also finds himself branded as a clown or fool. The same stamp is placed, in a sense, on the reverse side of the coin.

Orrin Klapp speaks of the fool as one who "represents values which are rejected by the group."<sup>67</sup> He is distinguished from the average person by a deviation in conduct which is regarded by the crowd as ludicrous and improper. Klapp adds, interestingly, that "fool-making" may be thought of in a sense as "a process of history", for public figures who become classified as fools lose respect and influence. Consequently, the branding of someone as fool is "a propaganda device of special significance."<sup>68</sup>

In The Lion and the Fox Lewis points out that the common herd always oppose anyone representing the principle of individuality or intelligence. The victim is often attacked because of his assertions of superiority or "greatness", but it is "the difference, not the superiority, that is the offence or the challenge...."<sup>69</sup> The wish to isolate oneself from the herd for any reason is immediately suspect, as in the case of the "secret drinker" who might drink much more if only he does it alone. "And to wish to be alone, or to drink alone,



or to do anything else alone, is the first step to the supernatural: which, in its turn, is the first step to the stake or the crucifix."<sup>70</sup>

The truth of these assertions is illustrated in Lewis's post second world war story "The Bishop's Fool", a character study of a rather heroic type of individualist-clown who appears, interestingly, in the dress of the tatterdemalion or tramp-clown. Rymer, the "Rector of Bagwick" is an oddity among his parishioners. And because of the pride in his independence, he is mistrusted and treated with hostility. Rymer is a sort of Christ-figure, persecuted by those who fail to understand him. Dressed in garments literally dropping to pieces, he moves about his parish among people who loathe the assertion of dignity and independence in the midst of poverty. This apparent absurdity promotes suspicion and rejection:

And as he moves around, from house to house, the doors shut quickly at his approach as if he were infected with some complaint which no one was particularly anxious to have; and out of rags tacked together his Oxford accent issues with incongruous patronage; his encyclopaedic affectations exasperate, his great heartedness abases — for there is no cash only credit in Heaven, the currency of religion, no longer legal tender.<sup>71</sup>

But Rymer accepts the ill-treatment passively, like a true Christian hero, and even makes a sort of joke of his apparent misery. Extremely poor, he prefers "to satirize his poverty, to clown, rather than to conceal... to make a great big comic virtue of necessity."<sup>72</sup> He appears, therefore, in a perhaps even more ragged dress than is necessary. Reference is made on several occasions to one patch in particular, on the rear of his trousers, which is almost like a flag and serves to proclaim his poverty and self-reliance as he parades about the town:



No mendicant friar ever hobbled down a street in a more tatterdemalion advertisement of poverty. A brownish tweed that was so obsolete that it necessitated a vertical patch the size of a folded newspaper in one place, the sleeves of which had to terminate in cuffs of leather three inches deep, and demanded to be reinforced with leather at the collar line and to have two pocket-tops bound with pigskin, was already qualified to serve the tramp-comedian in his act. Parti-colored patches practically everywhere had plainly been selected for effect. Only that could explain the mighty patch placarding his left side: for did it have to be black? It was a piece of "the cloth" called into serve — perhaps cut off what was left of the trousers he wore as a curate. Oh, Rymer — cabotin! — almighty clown! That was my first reaction to the Rector *chez lui*.<sup>73</sup>

His "get-up" is in fact, Lewis suggests, a form of protest — "a declaration of independence on the part of a proud parson" in asserting his dignity.<sup>74</sup>

Even in his own family Rymer is something of a curiosity:

Both Eleanor and son Robert love him, but are strangers to his exuberances. Therefore even in his home he is alone with his imagination, his poet's passion. All that is most serious to him seems like play to his family: his pastel, his politics, his pride in his poverty. That is not to say that his family are wanting in taste or vitality, only that he has too much — for a life passed on the poverty line. Indeed he is like a domesticated troll who having fallen in love with Eleanor had consented to live as humans do — and I have seen Eleanor stare at him with puzzled affection and he waggle his black patch at her and give a merry clerical whinny.<sup>75</sup>

Although Rymer's appearance and personality, which constitute his role as clown, are due in part to the expression of his individualism as well as to the necessity of circumstances, it is also evident that his behavior is in turn dictated somewhat by this adopted role which he takes pleasure in playing. The role indeed becomes a form of "inferior religion", a fetish. Lewis is, of course, always interested in the subtle discernment of incongruity in the makeup of a human specimen, and on Rymer's last visit he sees a side of the rector not



ordinarily perceived:

Gradually I grew accustomed to the lonely eye, staring at me with a new expression. It was not the eye of the Bishop's Fool. Samuel Hartley Rymer was there, as he had begun: the parson that was underneath the rags and patches — which he was not wearing today: the man who played the Bishop's Fool for my entertainment. Even the poet had deserted this forlorn figure.

All those attributes removed, the personality was as it were undressed. However, this psychological nudity was presented to me with dramatic satisfaction, so the old Rymer was there after all, peering at me dully out of his one eye.<sup>76</sup>

Lewis's description of his last meeting with Rymer includes a pathetic account of how Rymer received a brutal beating from one of the locals while the townsfolk jeered and laughed. After this final encounter Lewis never heard from Rymer again and he concludes: "I am beginning to wonder whether Rymer exists or whether he is not, rather, a figment of my imagination."<sup>77</sup>

And so we have in Rymer the example of a person who, because of the singularity, which sets him apart from the group, is made the butt of society. In our conventional world, to be an individualist is to be a clown!

Lewis's play The Enemy of the Stars presents (as the Blast #1 version of the play states) "two heathen clowns". These characters are the embodiments of two conflicting principles in the universe: Hanp, the simple clown, the mundane consciousness and agent or fool of the stars; and Arghol, the individualist and free-thinking clown — the "enemy of the stars".

An exposition of some of the ideas upon which the play itself is based is found in an appended section entitled "The Physics of the



"Not-Self". (originally published in *The Chapbook*, 1925) The not-self is a sort of intellectual principle which operates from a detached viewpoint independent of its "transient human associate". In most men, (and indeed this is the object of "civilized" society) this ultra-human principle has been to a great degree anaesthetized through the conditioning disciplines of society:

It is regarded as a breakerdown of walls, a dissolvent of nations, factions, and protective freemasonries, a radio-active something in the midst of more conservative aggregations, as naturally it is. It is an enemy principle....

The intellect, or the seat of that forbidden principle of the not-self, is the one thing that every gentleman is sworn, however hard pressed, never to employ. What cannot be obtained by way of self —by that great public road of private fraud —must be foregone. That is understood, universally recognized (by all White Men and pukka 'sports'). The intellect is the devil, it could be said. But more than that, there is something indefinably disreputable about it. It is not 'clean'. It cannot be described confidently as 'white'. It is not 'the thing'. It is unquestionably not 'top drawer'. It is irreparably unpukka. It is, in the last analysis, the enemy of all the constellations and universes.<sup>78</sup>

The play itself begins as Arghol emerges from his hut at the appearance of the stars. The setting is a "lonely moonlit catasta" that is, a place of punishment; in this case a place of punishment for the exertion of the conscious individual will. This particular setting is really, for the man of active intelligence such as Arghol, the allegorical representation of the whole of man's environment. For, as the play is meant to assert, the principle of intelligence has always been suppressed. Mitchel Morse expresses his views on the subject in the following way:

The root of all evil is consciousness, intelligence, deliberate choice, the exercise of which is essentially an act of usurpation or at least an expression of the dissatisfaction with the divine



arrangements. The original sin was intellectual curiosity, the quality that set Adam apart from the other animals. Thus, the peculiarly human quality is inherently sinful: to be fully human is to be cast out from grace.<sup>79</sup>

This is the problem which faces Arghol. One might speculate that having exercised his intellectual freedom for a time, Arghol finally has succumbed to the overwhelming odds against which he has struggled, and brought himself to this place where "the will of the universe is manifested, with directness and persistence".<sup>80</sup> Arghol reflects on the nature of the ultimate force in the cosmos, concluding with an expression of despair provoked by a realization of man's insignificance and impotence in the face of a deadly conservative universe.

Arghol says the blows he receives in this place are his "destiny":

Believe it or not, there is no way out! There is no 'new' anything. Offences against the discipline of the universe are registered by a sort of conscience — prior to the kicks. For instance, blows rain upon me here — mine is not a popular post, far from it. It is my destiny.<sup>81</sup>

The kicks seem to signify the more tangible expression of intellectual suppression by the traditional element in society. Hanp is the representative of this element.

Arghol: [The Self] is the one piece of property all communities have agreed it is illegal to possess. The sweetest-tempered person, once he discovers that you are that sort of criminal, changes his tune — looks askance at you, is upon his guard. When mankind are unable to overcome a personality, they have an immemorial way out of the difficulty. They become it. They imitate and assimilate that Ego until it is no longer one — that is what is called success. As between Personality and the Group, it is forever a question of dog and cat. These two are diametrically opposed species. Self is the ancient race, the rest are the new one. Self is the race that lost. But



Mankind still suspects Egoistic plots, and hunts Pretenders.<sup>82</sup>

Arghol's speech reflects Lewis's observations on "associational life" which he discusses in The Art of Being Ruled. The "inventive individual", he says, "is constantly exposed to destruction in a way that the uninventive, mechanical, associational man is not."<sup>83</sup>

Arghol has a vision which represents symbolically the artist's cynical conception of the world as a sort of macabre harlequinade. The description is very similar to the sort of picture one finds in Edith Sitwell's Clown's Houses or Sacheverell Sitwell's The Hundred and One Harlequins:

Existence. Loud feeble sunset-blaring like lumpish, savage clown, alive with rigid tinsel, tricked out in louse-infested pantaloons, before a misty entrance, upon the trestled balcony of a marquee, announcing events in a stale programme of a thousand breakneck sports — of poodles that sit up to tea, and of handcuffed men who eat their food or paint a landscape with the sole assistance of their feet — promising laughter and death mixed — of fat-bottomed pantomimes and mortal accidents from trapezes in the roof — the pink-tightied flesh of the female and the frisking beneath it of a milk-white horse-flesh to delight the horsy, punctuated throughout with the chatter of skilled Fools: a showman who bellows down to penniless herds, their eyes red with stupidity, crowding beneath him clutching their sixpences.<sup>84</sup>

A major portion of the play is taken up with a dialogue between the two protagonists, during which Arghol becomes increasingly vehement in his protestations against the suppression of human consciousness. Arghol is finally decapitated by Hanp, "the gleaming cleaver kissed by the starlight"<sup>85</sup> previous to the fatal blow. Arghol dies with the words: "Tell Nature — she was behind your arm — tell Nature — the job is done!"<sup>86</sup> Hanp is suddenly shocked by his own deed into a sudden realization of the consequences of his action.



Something distant, terrible, and eccentric, bathing in that sickly snore, has been struck down and forever banished from Matter. That he at last comes to recognise, and slowly he moves away. He wipes his hands upon a rag, looks towards the dark mouth of the shaft at the back of the roofless apartment, and then passes out of the hut into the yard. Suddenly all about him the electric night has grown particularly peaceful — attempting richly to please this official trespasser, the servant of the stars, with the gracious movements of its trees, or gay processions of glittering arctic cloud-banks. Immense relief throughout of the starry universe — congratulating itself heartily upon the news of this political assassination of first-class importance....

Very slowly the solitary figure of Hanp (observed by the faceless super Sfox) approaches the stone bridge over the canal, not far from the opal cloudlet. His face is wet with tears, his heart stamps weakly up and down within his chest, a sickly flood of moon-light beats miserably down upon him from across the water, cutting out an empty shadow behind him, which with difficulty he can summon the strength to drag forward. With a clumsy recklessness, like a bad actor — or else one in violent disagreement with his part, or fed up with the company and out to disgrace them with his casualness — Hanp springs off the parapet of the bridge.<sup>87</sup>

The Enemy of the Stars may perhaps be called an allegorical tragedy. Arghol is the "condemned protagonist", the hero of the individualist principle, fighting an eternal battle with the stars — the symbols of lifeless uniformity and opposition to change, while Hanp represents the unconscious agent of this stultifying punctilio-ness in the universe.

The true individual, Lewis felt, always finds himself isolated in his struggle for intellectual freedom. "The ideally 'free man' would be the man least specialized, the least stereotyped, the man approximating to the fewest classes, the least stamped into a system, in a word, the most individual."<sup>88</sup> Communizing principles are continually at work, however, either to purge him of his claims to freedom or brand him as a misfit — a clown. It is the price one must



pay for individual integrity:

We have one life, and we have one individuality. It is a ration, as it were. It is an 'obligation' (so people say sometimes about 'art') to devote all our energies to that one self, and not to poach. We were not born twenty men, but one. It is our duty 'to remain in our class'. Equally it is our duty to remain in our self — our one and only. But if we must go out of our 'class', then it is 'a sacred duty' to get into a higher one at least. And if we must go outside our self — if we are so wrong-headed — then at least it is our 'bounden duty' to see that we do not, at least, despoil ourselves for others. We must go outside in order to take, not in order to give. But it is far more dignified to remain closeted with one's inalienable physical possessions — like a sedate hen upon its eggs — from the cradle to the grave. Oh yes: that certainly is so.<sup>89</sup>

#### The Artist as Clown

As stated in the previous section, any man who overtly departs from the public norm will probably be included in the category of "clown". The individual most open to this accusation is the artist, since he is, if worthy of that name, most severely differentiated from the norm. His differentiation becomes increasingly apparent as man is subjected to more and more social and mental indoctrination.

The writer or painter is isolated from the general public to an unparalleled extent, at the present time. More than ever it is an age of sets, or of cells — that communizing principle is at work continually, producing larger and larger, and more and more closely disciplined, non-individualist units. There is for instance a Catholic world, which is almost entirely water-tight. If you submit to the law of the set, or the law of the cell, the cell, or set, does much of your dirty work beyond doubt. The effort is distributed. But (alas for art!) to create is to be individual.<sup>90</sup>

Deviation from the standard is, in fact, the primary characteristic of the artist, Lewis states:

It is the duty of the creative writer to keep himself different.... When he thinks of politics he may be a Collectivist: he may favor the idea of everybody becoming alike — parting with those little differences and peculiarities of theirs which make government so complicated. He



might consider individuality inadmissible in a welder and riveter, a stoker or baker, but realize that for himself it is essential: not because he wants to be an Individual, but because he has to be one.<sup>91</sup>

Related to this intentional segregation and forming a part of the artistic credo of a number of relatively "modern" artists is the so-called "detached" point of view. The question of detachment as a condition of the artist was of great concern to Lewis. In an article written in 1934 he speaks of the "dehumanist principles" of modern endeavor. A scientist is compelled to become a "depersonalized machine" for the sake of efficiency, and, similarly, "the artist, as much as the scientist, must exclude as far as possible the specifically human from the organization of his intellect. In his way, it is incumbent upon him to be just as cold-blooded as the efficient surgeon or duellist: his eye must be as detached, his hand as firm as theirs."<sup>92</sup> In The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator he says: "It is only the intellect, in its highest incarnations, that gives the really convincing 'detached' scientific picture of squalor ugliness or fraud. There lies the use of the intellect (or of the man possessed of a great intellect)...."<sup>93</sup>

Lewis, however, was aware of the limitations or dangers of adopting a stance which is too detached or which claims to be detached when it is actually, even if unwittingly, mobilized in the interest of political or ideological passion. Such pretention to detachment he thought he saw among the writers of Transition who, while claiming to be detached, exercised their own egocentric drives in their pursuit of what Lewis called a "romantic nihilism". These writers (Stein,



Jolas, Paul, and others) stand, he says, for an "intolerant exclusive hatred of the rest of the world."<sup>94</sup> Their "detachment", therefore, is not the objective stance advocated by Lewis for the artist. Lewis's fear was that such a pessimistic attitude would become "vulgarized" and develop into a sanction for the exploitation of the masses by the intelligent but unsympathetic few. If such were the case the public would be better off to keep the creative minds of the world in isolation rather than to have, through a "vulgarization of the authentic and lofty 'detachment' of the 'supermen'", a contemptuous patronage by a "swarming 'intellectualist' and artistic tribe of sub-supermen."<sup>95</sup> Such "dispassionate" and superior "detachment" Lewis wished at all costs to avoid, because he says: "so often what Art has produced in order to purge, has come into the hands finally of people who wish not to 'purge' but to poison and murder."<sup>96</sup>

It is clear, then, that Lewis is not advocating an "impersonal detachment". In Rude Assignment he says: "Let me agree, then, to the word 'detached', in the limited sense of habitually reserving judgement and not expressing oneself by action, and, in perhaps the most important things, holding to the deliverances of reason."<sup>97</sup> Lewis quotes with approval T.S. Eliot's estimate of his (Lewis's) "outsideness": "So far as I can see, Mr. Lewis is defending the detached observer. The detached observer, by the way is likely to be anything but a dispassionate observer; he probably suffers more acutely than the apostles of immediate action."<sup>98</sup> Lewis explains that the position



of the "individual" in this connection is really a "verbal abstraction":

A man is made up of hundreds of different compartments; some are occupied by impulses deriving from tradition; some occupied by personal experiences stored away for use; some filled with contemporaneous acquisitions; and many are empty. So the so-called Individual is not what that word means in controversy. Rather he is a mixed type — not an artificially uniform one, reacting in mystic harmony with a group.

It is to that narrowness that one is obliged to object. For the so-called Individual is, in the main, not himself. He is not all group, that is all; not all one group.<sup>99</sup>

Notwithstanding the qualifications that Lewis makes in explaining the detached point of view, the true artist is none-the-less set apart from the great majority of men and is, therefore, regarded as a peculiarity. Lewis endorses J.S. Mill's assertion in On Liberty: "If resistance waits till life is reduced nearly to one uniform type, all deviations from that type will come to be considered impious, immoral, even monstrous and contrary to nature."<sup>100</sup> The artist is, then, because his distinct personality prevents him from being collectivized, in the realm of the clown considered as the independent spirit. There is an amusing story in The Tyro about "Will Eccles" who is a painter and is "will-ful". Because of this eccentric behavior he is visited with an affliction which makes him most obviously "distinct", for "the creator had given him a rather bad smell because of his displeasure at Will's fondness for art and his Will-fulness."<sup>101</sup>

There is, in fact, a notable similarity between the artist and the professional clown. The artist is a sort of magician since he is a creator. And accordingly, Lewis says: "It is the appreciation of



this magical quality in artistic expression — a recognition that the artist is tapping the supernatural sources and potentialities of our existence — that composes a good deal the attitude towards him...."<sup>102</sup> The artist is able to metamorphose the natural world into a dream world through his poetic vision. Such is the ability also of the clown: "The clown is a creator, like a poet or a great tragic actor. He cocks a snook at the quotidian, and makes up his own world."<sup>103</sup> A famous example of a personality in whom we find both the artist and the clown is Shakespeare's Falstaff. As Lewis points out in The Lion and the Fox, Falstaff is able to transform the world into a stage in order to transcend reality, as for instance at Shrewsbury, where he turns the field of battle into a field of play. The artist is, in a sense, like Falstaff, a shaman, who dissociates himself from the objective world in order to create his own reality in a manner similar to that of a child, independent of any strictly conventional ideas because his mind is free of the conditioned responses of society.

What disturbed Lewis was that many of the modern artists are nothing more than performing clowns. Movements such as Dada proved detrimental to art in general, because they made it difficult to have any picture that was not strictly in the traditional style accepted.

These exhibitions where the public paid its bob or its five francs to go and sneer and laugh was the point at which the goose that lays the golden eggs finally stopped doing so.... these never very funny mock-exhibits were the undoing of the artist. No pictures could sell after a year or two of that, at least nothing off the beaten track.

This was the excuse that the British public, at all events, had been waiting for — to take nothing seriously, of all this 'modern



stuff'....The unorthodox became associated fatally in the public mind with the clownish. It was felt that the 'modern artist' had admitted that what he did was a practical joke. For everyone mistook this for the work of artists: there was no one to tell the public that it was only a 'rag' organized by a band of political journalists.

.....

The raree-shows labelled 'super-real' (in which the public were solemnly shown a lot of uproariously assorted junk) the final effort of Dada, was like an answer to their prayer to be quit of all this 'modern' nonsense. As if the poor public had not enough to worry about as it was!

They had at last become convinced that all along — and by everybody, who had ever 'cubed' or 'vorticised' — they were having their legs pulled. Here was the proof at last. The result was that people stopped buying pictures altogether, or bothering about 'art' at all.<sup>104</sup>

The artistic climate of the "modern" period is related, in Lewis's mind, to the pervasive "sense of humour" possessed by the modern man, who is unable to take practically anything seriously and approaches life as though it were merely some sort of game. In "Essay On the Objective of Art in our own Time", Lewis discusses the philosophy of games and the "sporting" spirit which he sees as associated, unfortunately, with art: "Like the whole of Life, art is no more than a game played by children. But all life, likewise is a game. And among all the games of which human life is composed — the political game, the business game, the sex-game, the game of science — art is as important as any."<sup>105</sup>

Lewis, of course, attacks this attitude and warns that the "amateurism" of much of modern art will eventually degrade art to the status of a game of cricket or tennis. The modern aesthete will be merely another variety of sport: "The most frequently used epithet will be 'jolly' for the beautiful; and its pursuit will be invariably



described as 'fun'."<sup>106</sup> The art-man will be "a very playful fellow indeed, who quite enters into the spirit of this 'amusing' life, and who is as true a 'sportsman' as any red-coated squire...."<sup>107</sup>

The increasing degredation of art is as much the responsibility of the unscrupulous art-man as it is of the indiscriminate public. The aesthetic circus at the present is a result of the ignorance of the masses who enjoy the performance of some intellectual clown, and this ignorance is abetted by the pseudo-artist who is content merely to be the buffoon of the "fooliaminy". It is the duty of the artist, and Lewis was a vigilant campaigner in this respect, to maintain his artistic integrity: "The artist must, if he is to survive, come to terms with the people at large, and no longer accept the role of a purveyor of sensation, or of a highbrow clown...."<sup>108</sup>

Consequently, the artist, whether he be of the genuine sort who retains his individuality for the sake of his art, or the pseudo-artist who is a mere performer only, falls into the category of "clown", simply because he does not appear to be "normal". In The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator Lewis says: "The ordinary man often thinks the artist a fool, or, if he does not go so far as that, is made vaguely uncomfortable by him, never really understands him."<sup>109</sup> And the dubbing of anyone as "clown" or "fool" is a means of dismissing him and consequently of gaining relief from the uncomfortable feeling generated by his presence in society.



Wyndham Lewis as Clown

Lewis himself is perhaps a good example of a true individualist who was also an artist of the first rank (The two were, of course, inseparable in his estimation). Since he qualifies so notably in both categories, he finds himself, because of his "peculiarity", in the position of a rebel, set apart from the majority, and susceptible, therefore, to inclusion in the select domain of the clown.

In Rude Assignment. A narrative of my career up-to-date Lewis speaks of the appellative "highbrow" which has been used in reference to him: "But this term — half abuse, half of derision — is not me, it is not an attribute of mine, or anything personal to me. It is just something that happens to any writer or other artist, to be described in this ridiculous fashion — one who is not a bestselling or potboiling hack."<sup>110</sup> One can easily see once again the process of propaganda at work in the branding of Lewis as "highbrow". It is a trick used by the public in an attempt to dismiss this rather disturbing intellectual in their midst.

This clownish American term, 'highbrow', is more than just a label. It is a uniform, as much as the garment stamped with arrows worn by the convict. For a man is a 'highbrow' all over, from head to foot, or not at all. He is somebody set apart from other men — for thinking in a peculiar way. He cannot mix with them without their at once detecting the difference, and feeling embarrassed. Even he uses a dialect — long and funny words and expressions — as unpopular with the solid citizen as is thieves' slang. He is regarded as 'stand-offish', but people stand off him, his company as much wanted as that of an escaped budgerigar by a cluster of sparrows.

The Philistine once felt diffident in the presence of the 'clerk' or Gelehrter — of his intellectual betters. But he knows now that they are only 'intellectuals', or 'highbrows' — jokes!<sup>111</sup>

A similar sort of attempt at ostracism is evident in the attack made



on Lewis in "Transition", in which he is branded as a "barbarian".

Lewis found that he had constantly to defend himself simply because he was an artist of the utmost veracity:

So I have no set or sell for the very reason that I am indeed an artist. Hence, if I paint a picture or write a novel, I have to be out at once, in the saddle next minute, lance in hand (my best pamphleteering-pen, that is, in position) — or Corona rattling away like a machine-gun — in defence of it.<sup>112</sup>

Perhaps Lewis had the critics of "Transition", as well as the general public, in mind when, in Wyndham Lewis the Artist. From Blast to Burlington House, he asserted:

Art is not active; it cuts away and isolates. It takes men as it finds them, a particular material, and works at it. It gets the best out of it; and it is the best that it isolates. The worst is still there too, to keep the man in touch with the world, and freer because of the separation. Perfect art insists upon this duality, and develops it. It is for this reason, and in this way, that the best art is always nearest to its time, as surely as it is the most independent of it. It does not condescend to lead. But often, an artist, simply because he takes hold of his time impassively, impartially, without fuss, appears to be a confirmed protester; since that actuality seems eccentric to those who are defective in will.<sup>113</sup>

The principle of "freedom 'because of the separation'" from the "crowd" is studied by Cantleman. Cantleman finds the crowd to be a kind of death, or at least an "anaesthetic towards death", since entry into the spirit of the crowd involves the shedding of one's individual personality. Cantleman, however, because of his mental dexterity, is, like the boy at the circus in "The Cornac and His Wife", able to immerse himself in the crowd and yet remain a detached observer. Cantleman's sentiments in this respect, Lewis states, were similar to his own at that time. What Lewis felt, he says, was a "great curiosity" but "no identification of my personality with that



collective sensation."<sup>114</sup> Lewis was, therefore, he realized, a "crowd-master" in a particular and special sense:

What was meant by crowd-master was that I was master of myself. Not of anybody else — that I have never wanted to be. I was master in the crowd, not master of the crowd. I moved freely and with satisfaction up and down its bloodstream, in strict, even arrogant, insulation from its demonic impulses.

This I regarded as, in some sort, a triumph of mind over matter. It was a triumph (as I saw it then) of the individualist principle.<sup>115</sup>

Lewis's triumph over the crowd and somewhat "arrogant" supremacy may be seen in his role as editor of Blast : "I felt it was due to the editor of Blast to be his own master to some extent. Once I had a 'pip' I could go on being a 'crowd-master', without interfering with anybody, or anybody interfering too much with me."<sup>116</sup>

In the manifesto of Blast #1 Lewis refers to the Vorticist group as "mercenaries in the modern world." They were, that is, objective critics of English culture. The personal role Lewis adopted as the "solitary 'enemy'" necessitated, he says, "not entirely a 'tough guy' attitude", but a "sternness and severity of mind that is appropriate to the man who does the stuff."<sup>117</sup> One-Way Song contains an amusing passage which formally introduces the "Enemy":

A great professional Outcast of the Pen,  
A happy swordsman, a modest gentleman.  
I refer, of course, to Mister Enemy.  
His shadow over everything I see,  
A hostile shadow — I scarcely think I blame  
This portent for his habits, or his name.  
Ours is a clownish age. If so the man  
You be to understand it then you can  
Scarcely be other than a Man in an Iron Mask  
Or choose but choose a most insidious task.—  
Henceforth the voice you hear is the deep growl—



The mask, if any, the notorious scowl—  
Of Enemy Number One.<sup>118</sup>

Lewis, however, did not wish his works to be taken merely as negative protestations against the status quo, but he found that they were often interpreted as such. In The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator he complains:

I see that it is impossible for an artist, confronted with such a waste-land as is found on all hands (of commercialized professional expression, both in books and in paintings) not to appear 'destructive': and it would be idle to pretend that any energetic mind ever has left life as it found it, or is ever likely to be satisfied with the standards of the 'average-sensual' majority. Hence every artist is a 'revolutionary', unless he is born into a period of universal exquisite fruition and political peace.<sup>119</sup>

It is interesting that in The Writer and the Absolute Lewis should refer to the court jester in connection with the "licence" necessary for the creative mind, for it seems to me that Lewis himself qualifies in many respects for the role of a court jester or court fool. Lewis has often been accused of showing-off, or indiscriminately displaying his knowledge and wit. This is, I think, to a certain extent true, particularly in his early career, and this is precisely what many of the court fools did. Another characteristic of the traditional fool, and one that is perhaps Lewis's most notable quality, is "detachment". One thinks of the Fool in King Lear, who, because of his "detachment", his "disinterestedness" (Mathew Arnold's term for the objectivity of the critic), is able to see things in their true perspective, while Lear's vision is hopelessly impaired by his involvement with family and state and his own self-centered point of view. As Lewis so often asserts, the detached viewpoint is the sine



qua non of the artist and critic.

The essential part of the court fool's role was to criticize the society of which he was a part and to ridicule its members. Lewis plays just such a role in Blast. Lewis mentions, in Blasting and Bombardiering, that following the appearance of Blast he became rather popular in artistic circles and was on display and examined as a sort of oddity. He was thus patronized by those whom he had attacked. These people may be thought of, then, as the court, and Lewis as the fool. It is obvious that Lewis was aware of himself as a performer of a sort on the cultural stage. In Wyndham Lewis. From Blast to Burlington House he discusses the flamboyant display capitals used in Blast: "As to these methods of the mob orator, they really had to be used...if you were a 'movement' you were expected to shout."<sup>120</sup> And shout he did! The tone of Blast reminds one of a charivari — a pandemonium of discordant noises, made by beating on pots and pans, and yelling in derision of someone who has given displeasure. It would be unfair, of course, to consider the entire content of Blast in this light, but it is, nevertheless, the obstreperous quality of the publication that first attracts one's attention — as, indeed, it was intended to do. Lewis may be seen, then, in his role as editor of Blast, as a sort of wise fool, standing apart from his subjects; a loquacious critic of the cultural scene as well as a performing clown in the eyes of the public.

It is to Lewis's great credit as an individual, I think, that throughout his lengthy career he continued to assert and defend his



personal integrity as an artist in spite of the numerous attacks with which he was assailed. In The Writer and the Absolute Lewis makes one of many assertions of his artistic credo:

More often than not I have gone ahead with what I set out to do, the writing has proceeded without falsification, and eventually has appeared in print in all its pristine tactlessness. So my work may be taken as the reverse of a model of prudence. As a result of my having failed to observe the simple rules I am laying down here, I have attracted to myself every description of malevolent interference. My books have suffered suppression and boycott. I may be taken as an object-lesson of what one cannot write. (In that capacity, it is as satirist that I excel) What has befallen me, or rather my books, proves what is my contention; namely that the mid twentieth century writer is only nominally free, and should not fail to acquire a thorough knowledge of the invisible frontiers surrounding his narrow patch of liberty, to transgress which may be fatal.<sup>121</sup>

In The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator he says:

I advance the strange claim (as my private Bill of Rights) to act and to think non-politically in everything, in complete detachment from all the intolerant watchwords and formulas by which we are beset. I am an artist and my mind, at least, is entirely free: also that is a freedom that I hold from no man and have every intention of retaining. I shall act as a conventional 'radical' at six this evening if that seems to me appropriate to the situation, and at ten a.m. tomorrow I shall display royalist tendencies if I am provoked by too much stupidity or righteous pomp from some other quarter.<sup>122</sup>

"Barbarian", "highbrow", or "clown" — call Lewis what one will — neither his courage and veracity as an individual, nor his prestige as an artist among those who matter, is ever seriously affected.



CHAPTER THREE  
THE DRAMA OF THE CLOWN AND RING-MASTER

Role-Playing

In the sixteenth century Erasmus, in The Praise of Folly, spoke of the playing of roles as a fundamental characteristic of human life:

If anyone seeing a player acting his part on a stage should go about to strip him of his disguise and show him to the people in his true native form, would he not, think you, not only spoil the whole design of the play, but deserve himself to be pelted off with stones as a phantastical fool and one out of his wits? But nothing is more common with them than such changes; the same person one while impersonating a woman, and another while a man; now a youngster, and by and by a grim seignior; now a king, and presently a peasant; now a god, and in a trice again an ordinary fellow. But to discover this were to spoil all, it being the only thing that entertains the eyes of the spectators. And what is all this life but a kind of comedy, wherein men walk up and down in one another's disguises and act their respective parts, till the property-man brings them back to the attiring house. And yet he often orders a different dress, and makes him that came but just now off in the robes of a king put on the rags of a beggar. Thus are all things represented by counterfeit, and yet without this there was no living.<sup>1</sup>

Huston Smith, in The Religions of Man discusses the practice of Jnana Yoga, in which it is believed that in fact everyone plays a role to a certain extent, depending on the relative influence his individual personality has on his thoughts and actions:

Our word 'personality' comes from the Latin persona which originally meant the mask an actor donned as he stepped onto the stage to play his role, the mask through (per) which he sounded (sonat) his part. The mask carried the make-up of the role, while the actor behind it remained hidden and anonymous, aloof from the emotions enacted. This is precisely what our personalities are - the roles into which we have been cast for the moment in this greatest drama of all, the comic-tragedy of life itself in which we are simultaneously both co-authors and actors. As a good actor gives his best to his part, we



too should play ours as close to perfection as possible. The disturbing fact, however, is that we have lost sight of the distinction between our true self and the veil of personality that is its present costume, its current shroud, but which will be laid aside when the play is over.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout much of his literary career Lewis seems to have been interested in characters who, for various reasons, adopt an artificial pose. He saw in this not only a necessity but a danger. A role could be either armour or weapon. He considered the counterfeiting of stupidity, for instance, by those seeking power, to be a real danger to the public at large who are, on the whole, easily gulled. The political arena, Lewis felt, was especially conducive to deceit: "Pretence is of the essence of much politics in all ages: for people cannot be so simple as frequently they act."<sup>3</sup> The semblance of fatuity, he observed, extends as well into the business world: There is no humbug so sedulously propagated as that regarding the stupidity of the business magnate. It is obvious why it is to that gentleman's advantage to have you believe that he is stupid. Such 'stupid' business magnates do exist, no doubt. But there are, but too plainly, many who are not stupid at all. - It is perhaps safer not to believe too implicitly in this much-advertised 'stupidity'. You are perfectly at liberty to disregard my caution.<sup>4</sup>

As an artist Lewis was particularly distressed that the business of predatory dissembling should exist as well in the field of art. Referring to the writers of Transition and to the Super-Realists as the "New Philistine" Lewis says:

Since the New Philistine for preference dresses like an artist, plays readily on musical instruments, lives in a studio if possible and so on -- in short, since he has disguised himself as that which he wishes either to tame and to put to some vulgar use or else to destroy, in the way that the Esquimau gets under a seal-skin to hunt a seal - to dissociate these masses of sham practitioners from the real ones is particularly difficult.<sup>5</sup>



The observations which appear in Lewis's expository writing, with regard to the prevalence of role-playing in human relations, form the basis for much of his fictional work. In a number of Lewis's novels, those characters who adopt various poses, for one reason or another, appear as clown-figures. In Tarr, Lewis's first novel, one encounters two role-players in the clown-figures of Tarr and Kreisler. At various times Tarr would make an absurd game of a situation, and his character "performed repeatedly the following maneuver: his best energies would, once a farce was started, gradually take over the business from the play department and continue it as a serious line of its own. It was as though it had not the go to initiate anything of its own accord. It was content to exploit the clown's discoveries."<sup>6</sup> Kreisler is the lonely type of clown figure, the outcast from conventional society. His clownery, like Rymer's "get-up" in The Bishop's Fool, is a sort of protest against the world. Kreisler seems to feel that since he is, in a sense, fortune's fool, he will "play the fool" to reciprocate. And in adopting the fool's role he acquires something of the fool's privilege for his outrageous behavior.

Reverend Card of The Red Priest, because of his eccentricity, is regarded as a clown ("'The Rev. Augustine Card is a clown....'"<sup>7</sup>) But Father Card is the dangerous type of poseur who takes advantage of the credulity of his congregation. In the absence of his second curate, Herbert Wimbush, Father Card "relished the idea of dressing up a street-hawker, disguising him in a tunicle and dalmatic, placing



him in the required position, in front of the high altar and trusting to the dumbness of the congregation not to notice the odd behaviour of this clumsy fellow."<sup>8</sup>

Father Card wears a mask in public which he removes in his intimate associations. Mary Chillingham is fascinated by Father Card's public personality, but finds quite another person when she visits him privately:

The only mask by which most people knew this unusual man had been dispensed with; and all the time she was there he remained as he must have appeared to intimates. For it was perfectly clear that the face she had always seen in public was one manufactured for his public life, one very rarely laid aside. By this time it was second nature, for it was rigidly adhered to; and, with the public face, went a public nature. Similarly, when he laid aside his official face, there was — quite intact — a private nature, which then quite visibly, as it were, he summoned from some interior. And he did not trouble to conceal his relief at finding himself able to be his 'private' self. Whereas publicly he 'sleep-walked', as it had been remarked, when he was without his usual disguise, he seemed to come to life. Mary was amazed at the alteration. It was as if he had lifted a mask off his face.<sup>9</sup>

Father Card reveals his contempt for the stupidity of his congregation when he says: "'It is only when I encounter an intelligent person that I am inclined to lay aside the conventions I have assumed. That happens very rarely.'"<sup>10</sup> Father Card considers his flock to be little more than a group of infants, and he refers to them as such:

"'Children, Children!' Father Card reproached them. 'Where are you going to stop? Am I wasting my time, then, as Vicar of this church?'"<sup>11</sup> After her interview with Father Card, Mary feels that she has been in the presence of some "alarming magician", and that "the unusual, mysterious Vicar of St. Catherine and the Angels had transformed himself...."<sup>12</sup>



Role-playing is often a major consideration in the make-up of Lewisian characters. In Childermass Lewis dramatizes the implications of role-playing in a contemporary context.

#### The Drama of Role-Playing in Childermass

Childermass is perhaps the centre of Lewis's thinking with regard to the exploitation of the public by crowd-masters who, by assuming various roles, including the role of the circus clown, conceal their awareness in order to better control and shape human plastic. The Bailiff is the imaginative creation of one such crowd-master and as such he is, in a sense, a symbolic embodiment of the times. Lewis's statement, in The Enemy, foreshadows his subsequent creation of the Bailiff: "Our period is like a person, in short, just as we are less and less like one; the secret of its being is technically expressed in terms of mass-psychology."<sup>13</sup> In his attempt to set forth his opinions of the period in an imaginative way Lewis employs, naturally enough, as other artists have done in searching for a human container for their ideas, the many-sided figure of the clown. In the Bailiff Lewis has created the ultimate in clown-figures, one who is able to transform himself at will into a multitude of roles. And as he did in "The Cornac and His Wife" Lewis chooses to show the circus, as a symbolic setting in which to portray human relationships.

The Bailiff's arrival at the camp is described in the terms of a stylized performance, witnessed by Pullman and Satters along with the rest of the camp. Lewis's subtle choice of words enforces the



image of the show and its mystic ritualistic quality. The word 'mass' is repeated as well, recalling the title Childermass and its implied meanings:

Two characters who have occupied the opening scene, they conventionally stand aside to observe the entrance of the massed cast in stately procession, Pullman's manner suggests; withdrawing discreetly a little into the mist, and peering at the massive business of the show as it unfolds itself at the centre of the stage of the Miracle heralded by the sudden detonation of a solitary furious trumpet. Are they observed by their stately silent fellow-actors? Nothing indicates that this is the case. If so, their personal affairs are effaced, as, in attitudes of stylized attention, marking the coming of the new event with whispered asides, they stand for the time being aloof puppets.<sup>14</sup>

The gathering place is enclosed by a "peribolos", inside which is a large auditorium similar in plan to an ancient theatre, with a hemicycle of seats on which sit the petitioners and their friends as well as those present merely to be entertained by "the show". A railing encloses the orchestra upon which, decorated with sundry symbols, is an elevated Punch-and-Judy theatre from whence the Bailiff addresses the throng.

The "Justice and his suite" proceed to their regular places as do the appellants. All is fixed by rigid custom. The appearance and actions of the Bailiff are arresting in their absurdity:

Tapping on the flags of the court with a heavy stick, his neck works in and out as though from a socket, with the darting reptilian rhythm of a chicken. His profile is balanced, as he advances, behind and before by a hump and paunch. He wears a long and sombre caftan. His wide sandalled feet splay outwards as he walks at the angle and in the manner of a frog. No neck is visible, the chin appearing to issue from and return into the swelling gallinaceous chest. Bending with a bird-like dart of the head and a rushing scuffle of flat sprawling feet, he disappears into the back of his box.

.....  
After some minutes the Bailiff reappears in the open chamber



above, hanging, a dark-robed polichinelle, over the ledge, which is of a strong and substantial description and serves him as a narrow desk. He now screws his bonneted head from left to right to observe the proceedings of his staff, clucking and snuffling fussily as he does so, tapping nervously with his fingers. Then, placing his stick in the corner, he sits down upon the joint-stool provided for him, resting his sleeved arms on the hand-rail and gazing, his hooked and bloated features exuding an impenetrable melancholy, towards the camp. The lymph of a bottomless obtuseness appears to invade his beaked heavy and shining mask, anaesthetizing it even to the eyes. In his hands he slowly revolves the pivotta used by the atellan actors to mimic the voices of the mimes of classical tragedy. He places it between his lips, letting it lie there, idly sucking it, a baby with its dummy, his eyes expanded to their fullest blankest and blackest. Then agitating his lips, at first with a little low chirping, gathering force and purpose, he suddenly bursts into a deafening gloch-gloch-gloch-gloch! Gloch-gloch! Gloch-gloch! terminating with a withering roulade in the bass.<sup>15</sup>

In his creation of the Bailiff, Lewis is recalling the commedia dell'arte figure of Punch. Allardyce Nicoll describes the English version of Punch as having a hump-back and hanging belly, clothes ornamented by lacing or strips of ribbon, a conical hat, and a half mask with "a huge hooked nose, a low forehead and a large wart on the brow."<sup>16</sup>

Punch's name, according to Enid Welsford, is most probably "derived from pulcino (late Latin pullicenus), a chicken, and is to be associated with the 'cock-type'...."<sup>17</sup> This would account for the Bailiff's "clucking" in the passage from Childermass quoted above. He is described on another occasion in Childermass as "immobile in the attitude of a carved rooster of bulbous red, conceived as congested in the act to crow...."<sup>18</sup>

The most noteworthy quality of Punch, or Pulcinella, as a figure in the commedia dell'arte, is his flexibility in assuming a



a variety of roles, and this is undoubtedly why Lewis employed the figure of Punch as the basis for his creation of the Bailiff. Nicoll states that "Pulcinella was a characterless dummy which could be dressed up in any way a particular actor — or a particular public — desired....A dramatic figure can never have individual personality if he is regarded as the representative of an entire people, and the identification of Punch with a whole community in itself testifies to the nature of his being."<sup>19</sup> Pulcinella's audiences "were not interested in his character; rather they delighted in listening to the gross blunderings and crude comparisons uttered in a diversity of circumstances, and never worried although one day Pulcinella came forward as a cowardly credulous fool and the next as a bold, vicious and successful rogue."<sup>20</sup> The Bailiff utilizes this quality of mutability inherited from his prototype, Punch, in the ministry of the fooliaminy populating the camp.

A further addition to the camp's administrative foolocracy appears in a sextet of imbecilic gibbering cockneys known as "the Carnegie batch". These six approximate most closely professional clowns, since they are employed largely for the entertainment of the Bailiff as well as of the petitioners. The Bailiff, in his role as "ringmaster", summons their appearance:

Three premonitory trumpet-notes sound from the enclosure. Tying their chokers, trotting clowns hurrying at the crack of the magisterial circus-whip, the six scuttle and trip, but never fall, the ground rising in pustules at their feet to mock them, the wind clipping them on the ear, or pushing them upon the obstructions arranged for them to amuse the idiot-universe. They skip and dance on the bulky treacherous surface of the earth, stoic beneath nature's



elemental hot-fisted cuffs, tumblers or Shakespearean clowns, punch-balls got up as Pierrot.<sup>21</sup>

Another trumpet blast and the raising of a flag announces the Bailiff's intention to address the crowd. In spite of the absurdity of his appearance, the role the Bailiff plays at this point is very serious and business-like. He begins his speech with a compliment to the crowd and his assurance that he is there to cater to their wishes with the utmost efficiency. He speaks in "a pleasant strong voice of great cultivation" with a flamboyant display of rhetoric, referring, for example, to the sun's light as "the characteristic incandescence of our infernal neighbor...."<sup>22</sup>

With an outburst of applause from the crowd the Bailiff illustrates his miraculous ability to alter the makeup of his role in order to win the support of the crowd:

Slowly driving out the decorous pomp of his magisterial manner, a half-baffled grin develops upon his face. A flush like the traditional red of anger makes its varnish glisten and redden. A retrograde movement of the hair gives suddenly a feline cast to the grinning, watching, incredulous mask. Leaning to one side upon the crutch or bludgeon which he has taken from its corner when rising to speak, slowly rolling his heavily-squinting eye up and down the side of his nose, he suffers the interruption attending on his marked popularity. When the response has subsided he bows and smiles in acknowledgment. A thick light of servile buffoonery illuminates his face. Then the mask of Punch-like decorum and solemnity is reinstated.<sup>23</sup>

Another flattering comment to the crowd is followed by "thunders of spontaneous applause", upon which the Bailiff "affectedly gasps".<sup>24</sup>

The figurative explanation of the petitioners' method of entrance into the place (forced "peristaltically" as though by an enema through the anus, represented by the gate of the camp), although



given in a serious tone, is met with laughter, which reveals the childish irresponsibility of the mass of petitioners with which the Bailiff is dealing, who can be made to laugh at the matter of their very existence:

Suppressed giggles disturb the silence of the crowd. Handkerchiefs are freely stuffed into mouths choking with sly mirth. Lips made into puckered O's, these bulls-eyes of the masks-of-scandal lisp fiercely, with bashful eyes eclipsed. One figure, its small sparkling eyes discharging a flux of tears above a crushed handkerchief used as a stopper, explodes, the stopper striking a neighbour upon the nape of the neck.

The Bailiff remains impassible, pausing only long enough to allow the most sportive to vent their spirits; then he continues.<sup>25</sup>

The crude analogy employed by the Bailiff associates him once again with Pulcinella, so that his role as ringmaster is obscured for the time being. "The chief quality of his [Pulcinella's] speech seems to have consisted in a kind of a stupid wit or witty stupidity essentially gross and vulgar, which often expressed itself by crude similes wherein the finer emotions and things of the spirit were brought down to crass earth."<sup>26</sup> The Bailiff's use of the metaphor is undoubtedly contrived to appeal to the boorish temperament of the fooliaminy.

As the Bailiff proceeds with his speech, it is evident that he is in complete control of the emotions and sentiments of the crowd. He is like the ring-master of this circus of children, receiving particularly vociferous support from those in his immediate vicinity: "A group of a dozen diminutive figures in the front of the audience and at the extremity of the tiers of seats nearest to the Bailiff, up at whom they gaze with round eyes of exaggerated



reverence during his harangue, bursts into rapturous clapping."<sup>27</sup>

After the Phoenix's dramatic arrival the Bailiff, slipping once more into the role of circus ringmaster, comments on the bird's appearance and asks the crowd how they liked it:

'Oh yes sir! It was lovely!' - 'Rather!' - 'I should think we jolly well did!' and similar exclamations rise with a fawning precipitation on all hands; eyes everywhere are dutifully lighted up, hands clapped, everything is one writhing spasm of appreciation. The Bailiff watches the obsequious ferment of the crescent-shaped wave of beings beneath him, smiles till his nose-tip touches his humped chin quickly, then proceeds, snapping his smile to in the manner of a telescope.<sup>28</sup>

At one point in his speech, the Bailiff demonstrates once again his mutability by shrinking a foot, growing taller than normal, and finally returning to his former height. "Thereupon he stands-easy, breaks into smiles and rolls out his genial relief at the successful issue of the test over the audience."<sup>29</sup> Later he effects another and more dramatic alteration:

He sinks back panting into the painted arms of the adolescent god of Thrace adorning as a hackcloth the interior of his lodge, and as a few here and there watch his honeyed collapse his person is observed to merge in the form of the divinity. As a result it is not Swatchel but a dark young man with a cheese-red clammy skin ornate baroque locks of moist blue-black (but suspiciously round-shouldered if not hump-backed), tossing a tumbled fawn-skin and chaplet of vine-leaves superciliously (but yet remarkable for a decidedly heavy wedge of nose far too swart arched and conspicuous), who next collides, unused to so cramped a scene, with the narrow counter from which a cataract of official forms falls into the court beneath as he leaps into the breach brandishing a goblet held aloft by a hand gleaming with magisterial jewellery.

BAILIFF-BACCHUS. 'Scowl!'

'Scowl!' shortly replies the quick-witted but abashed audience gazing tongue-tied at the reverse of the Bailiff.

The Thracian divinity skoal-drinks with dashing nordic abandon then crashes the goblet down bottom-up, true Thracian-Norse, upon the shelf before him. It cracks and rather slowly falls to pieces, some



parts dropping within the box and some without.

'Scowl!' Viking-Bacchus huskily repeats but in the accents of the vanished Bailiff.

He wipes in a long wet caress his thick distinct lips, curved as a nigger out-cropping of lighter intestinal tissue, with a self-appreciative eye upon the mortal assembly.

'Scowl!' he repeats still more thick-tongued and husky, almost inaudible, castanetting the bacchanal moisture from his slack fingers forward into the court. He hangs indolently exhibitional for some moments in the royal box-front, basking in the publicity, giving all and sundry the full benefit of his beauty, a brooding smile distilling a slow obtuse molassine good-will-to-all-men of coarse-lipped luxury. The intensity of the will-to-please brings on a sultry squint; such crude good-nature suggesting a change of posture he cocks up a hip with a shuffling of ponderous legs, one knee going back while its mate comes forward the flesh of one limb piping-hot with its nap of harsh down brushing with auto-flattery its neighbour at its passage. An impatient panting 'Hch!' announces a hitch. With petty-pussy finger cocked up, the single crook of an index coquettishly claws back the Petticoat-lane fawnskin which has slipped its adipose-mooring and in sluggish descent is coming off the sleek expanse of nude shoulder, carved in sweaty Cheddar. From star to stage-struck there are tokens, signals; quickly he turns back and in response to the telepathic salvoes of sympathy and admiration registered, he shakes his head and screws his eyes still tighter: that dear stupid staring awestruck thing — the eternal Public — that will have its favourite show himself again, heaven bless its big foolish heart!<sup>30</sup>

The Bailiff's technique as an effective crowd-master involves, as we have seen, the playing of a double role. He is the "showman" or "ringmaster", like the showman in "The Cornac and His Wife". But just as the showman in "The Cornac and His Wife" attempted to usurp the role of the people's favorite, the clown, by his wit, so also the Bailiff adopts the guise of the clown as well. The Bailiff, therefore, is able by his versatility, to benefit from the advantages of both roles.

In his role as clown the Bailiff associates himself with the crowd, so that he appears to be one of them, and in order to do so he assumes the speech of a child:



BAILIFF. 'Dat's my oozy swatch-cove patter!'

'Is dat your swatch-cove patter?'

TWO BAILIFFITES. 'Say, is dat your swatch-cove patter?'

He lifts his arm in comic fury, threatening a back-hander at least in gymnastic dumb-show.

BAILIFF. 'You dirty down-trodden darlings you for two tidy pins picked up on a frosty night for luck I'd come right down there and cuffoo cuffoo, yes I would you mind I don't.'

The nearest favourites make as though to parry a blow, affecting anxiety.

BAILIFF (coughs). 'Scoose my little language.'

He leans out towards the most egregious fledglings or impossible prank-heavy kittens as they pop and dodge in arch response and opening his mouth makes at them the sound solicited by the physician examining an inflamed tonsil.

BAILIFF. 'Aaaaah!'

APPELLANTS IN CHORUS. 'Aaaaah!'

BAILIFF. 'Aaaaah!'

APPELLANTS IN CHORUS. 'Haaahaahaaaah!'

BAILIFF. 'Ole black clam — see de roof? it's all baby-nigger.'

APPELLANTS IN CHORUS. { 'All his roof is negro baby!'  
 'Oh how exciting! he's after all Afro, who'd have thought it!'  
 'Our black baby!'

BAILIFF. 'Yes Black Baby yes Black Baby!'

APPELLANTS IN CHORUS. { 'It's too marvellous he's black! We thought he was White.'  
 'It's too marvellous he's not after all Blank!'  
 'He's not a dirty White as we have been led to suppose not a Blank which is too marvellous!'  
 'Oh our Bailiff's black inside him only his outside's dirty Paleface.'  
 'Hail Black Bailiff! We are lucky we are lucky!'<sup>31</sup>

The Bailiff continues for a time the infantile play with the



appellants, by means of which he keeps them reduced to children. He then "switches to the calm lower key of conscientious expositor, frowning upon the setbacks of his mornings programme and its disadvantages."<sup>32</sup>

Part of the Bailiff's ambiguous role both as showman and clown is his pose as a commiserating and jovial father-figure, attending to his children. He refers to them occasionally as his flock and himself as the shepherd: "'I am your shepherd, use me as you will!'"<sup>33</sup>

In addition to the general ring of supporters gathered around him, the Bailiff makes use of a chorus of sycophants who provide him with occasions for compounding his paternal image:

Another of the group of diminutive figures providing the tapett-chorus, eager minors as distinguished from the majors, which supports in the character of a confederated claque the utterance of the principal actor, holds up a hand. It is forced stiffly up and up into the air, the little fist clenched, while the buttocks of its owner wriggle excitedly upon the stone where he delicately perches or else jumps up and down in an ecstasy of suppressed inquiry....

..... At length the Bailiff smiles over at him, avuncular solicitude puckering the jolly features of Uncle Punch....

..... 'Please, what is the difference between a person and an individual?'

'All the difference in the world, and out of it, all the difference between me and you my sympathetic little fellow!'

Absolutely everybody laughs who is attending, applauding the Bailiff's sally to the echo. Even Chris the most eminent among the favourites, a sort of leader of the dithyrambic choreutae of the major order, in a perse-plum skirt-trousered suit, lavender-spatted, smiles slightly at the facetiousness, remarking in a dismal throaty cultured underbreath to his stern eyeglassed follower of forty-odd that he has never seen My Lud so young to which the follower replies No, he is very lively this morning, but that he believes he has something up his sleeve, that his laugh is a little raw and edgy. 'I do wish those young idiots would stop asking questions!' Chris



testily replies intending the minors. When the laughter has expended itself the resourceful magistrate addresses himself once more to the audience at large, looking out over it comprehensively as a conductor with a numerous and complicated orchestra.<sup>34</sup>

In his talk with Hyperides the Bailiff admits to the playing of a role to further his purpose. But like many of Lewis's clowns, he seems to come under the domination of his role, from which it requires a concerted effort to recover:

'That I am a respectable jolly Punch-like person who is sadly misjudged, that is my case of course that is the plot. I am jolly and misjudged I am a Punch-like person (jolly and misjudged) the idea in a nutshell, neat and sweetly pretty. But I'm not going to say that I am like this by accident, oh dear no! oh dear dear dear dear no! I can account for every ounce of my hump and I grow this nose on purpose, I feed it with fine nasal fodder imported from my sweated plantations (poor black-and-white-trash mixed) in the tropic of Cancer. Now will you lisserndt termee Hipe ant not pee so silly-pillie! Wilt? Hipe? No no! Not go! 'I promise!' you irritated me - I'll not go-off-the-track again - never - honssthinj! - hearmeout! - hoppitnot! - Hipe! - this once! - having putter hand turrer plar - take no denial - Ime rights rain - one chance more - lovely ladies - beautiful bilgewater - bloomingas-blooming - one of the best - never say die - top o' the morning - Kilkenny cats - very!'

Dickensjingling and swatchelstammering he stops with the soft clatter of his ornaments as he shudders shaking off his little fit.

BAILIFF. 'Hyperides this is serious. Lissnerndt - listen to me. Listen. (I'm quite recovered.)'<sup>35</sup>

With the original entrance of Hyperides a second vortex or ring is set up, so that the situation is analogous to a two-ring circus, with a showman in each ring. Like the Bailiff, Hyperides is a crowd-master, with "an eager ring of disciples"<sup>36</sup> gathered around him:

Grandly outlandish, he is in the company of a tatterdemalion body-guard. His smashed michelangelesque nose, with its vertical ridges of cartilage, deepset eyes, the centripetal ribs of wrinkles terraceing his brows beneath black Vitruvian curls, remains stamped a mask of force, a dark cameo, in the centre of the crowd of faces.<sup>37</sup>



The original Hyperides (389-332 B.C.) was a highly trained orator noted for his persuasiveness (The Hyperides of Childermass is called "loud-speaker") and his championing of the rights of the oppressed. The Bailiff's opponent is cast in a similar role but like the Bailiff he too has a facility for controlling the crowd:

At the slightest hint they take fire, in everything over-zealous, they leap into every suggestion of a breach, theirs is the Legion of Lost-Causes, they have the tattered grandeur of an Imperial Guard at its Waterloo, a cambronne-esque The Guards die, they do not surrender is painted all over them, they advertise doom in all their attitudes with a heroic rejoicing.<sup>38</sup>

The Bailiff refers to this group as "That set - the high-brow circus you know, the followers of the so-called philosopher, Hyperides...."<sup>39</sup> One is reminded of Lewis's reference in Rude Assignment to the American term "high-brow" as a label stamped on the artist to separate him from the crowd as an oddity, like a fool or clown. The Bailiff also refers to Hyperides as the "keeper of misrule",<sup>40</sup> which brings to mind the medieval folk festivals in which a "Lord of misrule" was chosen to lead the revellers in an orgy of foolishness.

But the Bailiff is in fact pleased at the arrival of his "legendary enemy", Hyperides, for it enables him to play the role of the champion and voice of the common herd, vying against the principle of singularity. The situation is similar to that in The Enemy of the Stars, in which the two conflicting principles in the universe - self-expression and the voice of dull uniformity - compete for supremacy. And here again Lewis presents the struggle as a timeless ritual:



The Bailiff is electrified at the impact of the new voice, and he lights up all over. The sounds stagger his senses like a salvo from a gong announcing battle from the positions of a legendary enemy. It is a hail from the contrary pole, it opens for him by magic the universe that lies between which before the voice came was shut and dead. With eyes of the most velvet challenge he turns gladly to the interrupter. It is the bearded figure but recently arrived....

.....

They are the oldest opposites in the universe, they eye each other: all this has been enacted before countless times, on unnumbered occasions all these things they are now about to say have been uttered, under every conceivable circumstance. He blinks his eyes in veiled welcome.

The voice roars out with the consummate accent of a role constantly rehearsed.<sup>41</sup>

The Bailiff makes an appeal for the sympathy of the crowd in his struggle with this disturbing element which has arisen in their midst:

'If you'd heard as much Hyperidean invective as I have in my time you'd think me the most patient of men. What a chap what a man! I had his head cut off once. But he was back here in a couple of months - after a short stay as an apparition at his old home on earth. He was very indignant. He was superb. I wish you could have heard him. Twice he has escaped from over there.' He jerks his head towards the city. 'It's difficult to know what to do with him. Do you want my job? You can have it!'

His confidants look at each other with merry delighted grins or with smiling condescension. Good old Bailie! The most animated glance back with roguish inquiry in the direction of Hyperides, surely discomfited by their resourceful champion.<sup>42</sup>

Hyperides is well aware of the Bailiff's methods of crowd-mastery, which oppose the individualist principle. The indispensable feature of the Bailiff's power, Hyperides realizes, is the maintenance of foolishness among the members of the crowd:

Have I your secret - the more foolish you can make Mr. Everyman look, the better, else you would not be able to cut such a fine figure yourself? - But as opposed to this helpless mass of bottle-sucking cannon-fodder you regard the human male as your ambitious promethean enemy. The male principle is scarcely your favourite principle where the human herd is concerned! - that is so is it not? So you would drive back mankind into the protozoic slime for the purposes of your des-



potism where you can rule them like an undifferentiated marine underworld or like an insect-swarm: that is the big idea? — do we understand one another? Have I in my hand the secret of your complacent insistence upon the advertisement of super-sex old quacking Punch and Judy showman-puppet? — have I put my finger on the reason why you chuckle and cackle so light-heartedly when you observe yourself surrounded by this trooping of obsequious gazebos? — No Mister Procurator, it is you who waste time!<sup>43</sup>

The Bailiff wishes for a time to speak with Hyperides on a personal level, at a level distinct from his public role, as one exploiter to another. In the passage concerned the Bailiff testifies to the method of crowd-control, by which he absorbs the personality of the crowd in the manufacture of his public persona:

BAILIFF. 'I have a truth for your private ear Hyperides.'  
HYPERIDES. 'My what?'

BAILIFF. 'Yes, it is one that it would be pure loss to evulgate before this mob you are out here with. Will you give it your attention?'

HYPERIDES. 'Yes, I will hear you. Having brought ourselves to submit to this public farce, I suppose we must lend ourselves to that too and give hospitality to your asides. But my friends will overhear you. Try not to refer to them as mob and as herd.'

BAILIFF. 'The mob are beasts, exclaims the King of Daggers!'

HYPERIDES. 'But since they do not recognize you as a person, as you know, mob on your lips is for them a simple offence without meaning.'

BAILIFF. 'I am the conjurer for their conceit: I will show them who is mob and who is not! Le mob c'est moi!'<sup>44</sup>

The Bailiff is the crowd because he has fashioned himself in its image so that he appears as one of them, and is thereby able to manipulate them. The Bailiff is thus both the puppet and the puppeteer, or clown and crowd-master.

The question of his grotesque appearance is explained by the Bailiff as still another artificial technique in seeking to play the role of the common man:



You say you are astonished to discover me in this shape: you are so literal you will not admit the possibility of disguise. My form is unprepossessing, it is not worthy of the occasion - I should have put my best clothes on, have had myself massaged and anointed! - I am told that I behave 'beneath my dignity!' That means that I behave in a human manner. But do not men always exclaim in that fashion when they detect one of those unfortunates whom we have just been discussing behaving like one of themselves? Well I always behave 'beneath my dignity', it is my most settled policy, I would not be my own equal for worlds, I would not contaminate myself by being myself with these carrion. So I cheat the vulgar of that handicap, at all events, which they immediately with the most implacable malice impose upon you the moment you have betrayed the compromising fact that you are their better....

.....  
HYPERIDES. 'What I understand you to say is that, given what men in the average are and their native hatred of excellence, then even a presentable human form symbolizes too much -that, called upon to be symbolic, the wise man would choose the most unpleasant body he could find?'

The Bailiff assents by a smile.<sup>45</sup>

In a number of his books Lewis expresses concern about the exploitation of the masses by the intelligent but unsympathetic few. In The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator he says that The Art of Being Ruled, which appeared in 1926, "was the first of the present writer's series of books devoted to the work of radical analysis of the ideas by which our society has been taught to live."<sup>46</sup> Lewis felt that the manipulation of the public for selfish purpose is due in part to what he refers to as "the vulgarization of disgust":

The critical dissatisfaction of the scientific and philosophic mind where human capacity is concerned is not novel. Vulgarization is the novelty....

Philosophers or men of science, witnessing the popular miscarriage of their thought, are disgusted or resigned, as the case may be. The democratic ruler (who alone is responsible for the worst and most calamitous miscarriages) associates himself with them; and in chorus they all abuse the poor plain man. What has happened is that disgust has been vulgarized. This is more deadly in its effects than the vulgarization of knowledge. The natural insolence and desire



for a feeling of superiority of those who are superior in nothing but money and the power it gives, is thus provided. And the noble pessimism of the speculative mind is at once translated into acts, and employed as a sanction for exploitation.<sup>47</sup>

One of the means by which this exploitation is effected is "that the ruler becomes a confirmed practitioner of one of Haroun al Raschid's most objectionable habits, namely, that of spending his time disguised among his subjects as one of them."<sup>48</sup> This is, of course, precisely what the Bailiff does. He plays the role of the fool in order to gain the support of his audience, because as common fools themselves they are readily able to identify with him. By assuming the role of the clown the Bailiff gains the unconscious support of the crowd, and is thus able to manipulate them according to his will. The Bailiff's clownishness recalls once again Pulcinella, whose stupidity, Welsford says, "was almost always feigned for his own evil purposes...."<sup>49</sup>

The Bailiff at one point asserts his resemblance to Socrates, and although the Hyperideans shout "'Sacrilege!— Socrates!— Swine!'"<sup>50</sup>, the comparison is not at all unfounded. Wylie Sypher speaks of Socrates' clownish guise:

The essential character of the eiron is incarnate in Socrates, who was "ignorant" and who also had the disposition of the "buffoon" or "fool", the features of the comic spirit itself, the coarse, ugly mask of the satyr or clown. The Socratic method is a tactic of winning victory by professing ignorance, by merely asking questions of the "imposters", the so-called "wise" men of Athens. Irony "defeats the enemy on his own ground", for in the course of the comic debate the supposed wisdom of the alazon is reduced to absurdity, and the alazon himself becomes a clown.<sup>51</sup>

Childermass is the result in part of Lewis's observations in



connection with the exploitation of the masses by the "great crowd-masters, those great engineers in the human-plastic" (the Bailiff's words),<sup>52</sup> whose methods resemble those of the Bailiff. The Bailiff is aware, as Lewis was, of the insensibility of man in the mass, and of his subconscious desire to stay that way, to be herded by those such as the Bailiff, who asserts at one point: "'I am your shepherd.'"<sup>53</sup> But a solitary voice retorts:

'You are our butcher!'  
 BAILIFF. 'No, shepherd.'  
 VOICE. 'Butcher!'  
 BAILIFF. 'Shepherd!'  
 A VOICE. 'What's the difference?'  
 BAILIFF. 'I started by saying I was your bugaboo but I exaggerate: I lighten your lot. I touch you with an opium-wand and you sleep obedience: if you describe this instrument of justice in terms of that sort, all I can retort is that you are very lucky to be supplied with such a costly and desirable drug and I only wish that some one would administer that heavenly sleep to me!'<sup>54</sup>

There are always a few individuals, and they are represented in the camp as well, who seek to instill an awareness into the minds of the dull clowns who comprise the bulk of society. Alectryon speaks as the incarnate voice of those who would awaken the masses from their lethargy:

'The mobilization— conducted beneath the comic stutter of the afro-American tom-toms — of neuter classes (misinterpreted by the mobilized entirely and seen as a summons to purple passion) fills us first with a sad amusement but then comes the bitterness of conscience again, of the only persons who are not blindfolded in all this gigantic bluffing, and a little roughly perhaps we turn to attempt to wrench off the blinkers from this doomed herd.'  
 BAILIFF. 'A doomed herd?'  
 ALECTRYON. 'It is everywhere.'  
 BAILIFF. 'It is useless and they would not thank you.'  
 ALECTRYON. 'I said it was our conscience, you are forgetting that we are human that is fearful.'



BAILIFF. 'Oh ah of course you are not animals like the rest of us I forgot. But I can tell you this - to be serious for a moment - that if you are human they are not: and if you succeeded in removing the bandages they would trample you to death for robbing them of their illusions, that's what they are like. We understand these herds, you do not, we are expert drovers. I suggest you would do well to leave us to deal with them....'<sup>55</sup>

The Bailiff is made to deal with another individualist-clown in the person of Macrobr, but again soliciting support from the foolocracy, the Bailiff seeks to dismiss him as an outlandish fool.

MACROB. 'I gather that you reject in your religion all idea of progression. Human life you regard as a term, the crystallization of a personality, which, once it has become, cannot ever not exist. Posthumously, you make that into the displeasing forms we see around us.'

'Speak for yourself!' shouts a hunchback in the crowd, amid a delighted effervescence. The Bailiff laughs gaily at the kindred deformity.<sup>56</sup>

Macrobr continues to question the Bailiff and to stare at him with "penetrating scrutiny" but the Bailiff replies: "'Macrobr! You're absurd! Really totally absurd, yes.'"<sup>57</sup> The Bailiff says that Macrobr ought to be considered as just another one of the Hyperidean crowd of fools who oppose the blissful somnolence of the crowd: "'There are some people who spend their time spoiling everything for their more ignorant fellows!'"<sup>58</sup> He dismisses Macrobr's individuality as misguided folly: "'Really a fool is the only thing to be if you are human: you are a spoilt-fool Macrobr (that is worse than a spoilt child in my opinion), quite a respectable fool gone wrong.'"<sup>59</sup>

The Bailiff is finally attacked by Macrobr, who is then savagely beaten to death by the Bailiffites. The Bailiff then assumes once



again the pathetic role.

BAILIFF. 'Why do they always pick on me? Oh I don't know I'm about through, I've had my fill of kicks it's not as though I'd wished any harm what have I ever done not to a newt let alone anorubble appellers, lock the foot that kicks, kicks, morons and yahoos, that's their style look up to you if you, yes but never a thank-you for your pains, you can sweat your guts out death's not good enough, kindness yes back-foremost like the eye of the camel, giving-too-little and asking-too-much like the Dutch in the limerick, what are we different clay? no fellow-feeling no love nothing you'd say so to listen, where's the sense in where's the use? what's the - what's the end where does it all finish? one's no forrader at the end, one's always hated by this lot human cattle though I say it who shouldn't one's not pop - not as once one was - loved I was!'

BAILIFF. 'I wish all of you well from the bottom of my heart! You have if you only knew it the best friend you'll ever have in me! the best friend the most kind and helpful yet what do I get - nothing but insults, I'm held responsible for everything in heaven and earth, why I should like to know - I do my duty that is all any one would think the way some people behaved that I was at the bottom of the whole business! I'm not. Nothing to do. On the contrary I use myself up day in day out in trying to lighten the lot of you chickens. I know things are not ideal God knows - life is life I can't help it - I'm in it too aren't I? I get my nose pulled for my pains and what do you care?'

A murmur of sympathy rises on all hands.<sup>60</sup>

An intermission of fifteen minutes is announced as the Bailiff steps out of his box.

Every one has risen, the greater part clapping their hands as they stand, facing the empty seat of justice as though it were the rule for the principal actor to return and bow. An attendant mounts into the Punch-and-Judy theatre and draws the curtains.<sup>61</sup>

In Childermass Lewis has effected a thorough treatment of the possibilities of the clown's role in its contemporary context. The Bailiff incorporates the various turns the role might take (witness the incessant changes in the Bailiff's appearance and demeanor) in its evolution in the twentieth century. In "The Cornac and His Wife"



Lewis considered the interesting possibility of a confusion in the long-established roles of clown and showman or crowd-master, and their relationships with the crowd. The showman, on that occasion, by exercising an intelligence normally foreign to his role, arrogated to himself the clown's role. At the time this seemed merely a temporary and frivolous "freak of personality", as Ker-Orr was made to observe. What Lewis himself finally observed taking place in contemporary society was not an occasional whim, but the conscious usurpation of the clown's role by those in authority. The clown's role, which had been the traditional symbol of individual liberty against authority, was being turned into a weapon for its destruction. What one finds in Childermass, then, is the ultimate destruction of the figure of the clown as a symbol of personal freedom. The crowd-master, traditionally thought of as the ruler and butt of the clown, could in the twentieth century, by adopting the clown's role, destroy the individual freedom of which the clown, like the child, was the traditional symbol.



## FOOTNOTES

### Chapter One

<sup>1</sup>Bransten, "The Significance of the Clown in Paintings by Daumier, Picasso and Rouault", 21.

<sup>2</sup>Welsford, The Fool, 3.

<sup>3</sup>ibid., 27.

<sup>4</sup>ibid., 52.

<sup>5</sup>ibid., 74.

<sup>6</sup>ibid., 116.

<sup>7</sup>ibid., 184.

<sup>8</sup>ibid., 128.

<sup>9</sup>ibid., 71.

<sup>10</sup>ibid., 200.

<sup>11</sup>ibid., 219.

<sup>12</sup>ibid., 323.

<sup>13</sup>Fülöp-Miller, The Mind and Face of Bolshevism, 273.

<sup>14</sup>ibid., 273-274.

<sup>15</sup>ibid., 274.

<sup>16</sup>ibid., 274-276.

<sup>17</sup>Bragdon, Merely Players, 25.

<sup>18</sup>ibid., 25-26.

<sup>19</sup>Santayana, Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies, 137-139.

<sup>20</sup>Bragdon, Merely Players, 28.

<sup>21</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 66-67.

<sup>22</sup>Gilot and Lake, Life with Picasso, 350.



<sup>23</sup>ibid., 351.

<sup>24</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 68.

<sup>25</sup>Huff, Charlie Chaplin, 7.

<sup>26</sup>Payne, Charlie Chaplin, 11.

<sup>27</sup>Huff, Charlie Chaplin, 9.

<sup>28</sup>Bransten, "The Significance of the Clown in Paintings by Daumier, Picasso and Rouault", 39.

<sup>29</sup>ibid., 22.

<sup>30</sup>Blunt and Pool, Picasso, 22.

<sup>31</sup>Bransten, "The Significance of the Clown in Paintings by Daumier, Picasso and Rouault", 27.

<sup>32</sup>Blunt and Pool, Picasso, 22.

<sup>33</sup>Gilot and Lake, Life with Picasso, 349-350.

<sup>34</sup>Druon, Bernard Buffet, unpaged.

<sup>35</sup>Bransten, "The Significance of the Clown in Paintings by Daumier, Picasso and Rouault", 35.

<sup>36</sup>ibid., 35.

<sup>37</sup>ibid., 37.

<sup>38</sup>Lewis, "Rouault, Painter of Original Sin", unpaged.

<sup>39</sup>ibid., unpaged.

<sup>40</sup>ibid., unpaged.

<sup>41</sup>ibid., unpaged.

<sup>42</sup>ibid., unpaged.

<sup>43</sup>Courthion, Georges Rouault, 86.

<sup>44</sup>Bransten, "The Significance of the Clown in Paintings by Daumier, Picasso and Rouault", 21.



Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup>Lewis, The Wild Body, 138.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., 139.

<sup>3</sup>ibid., 140-141.

<sup>4</sup>Disher, "Psychology of the Show", 142.

<sup>5</sup>Lewis, The Wild Body, 146-147.

<sup>6</sup>ibid., 147.

<sup>7</sup>Seldes, "Burlesque, Circus, Clowns, and Acrobats", 255-261.

<sup>8</sup>Lewis, The Wild Body, 147-149.

<sup>9</sup>ibid., 149.

<sup>10</sup>ibid., 149

<sup>11</sup>ibid., 150.

<sup>12</sup>ibid., 150.

<sup>13</sup>ibid., 158.

<sup>14</sup>ibid., 161.

<sup>15</sup>ibid., 164.

<sup>16</sup>ibid., 164.

<sup>17</sup>ibid., 165.

<sup>18</sup>ibid., 165.

<sup>19</sup>ibid., 166.

<sup>20</sup>Lewis, Rude Assignment, 113-114.

<sup>21</sup>Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist. From Blast to Burlington House, 124.

<sup>22</sup>ibid., 221.

<sup>23</sup>Lewis, "Plain Home Builder: Where is your Vorticist?", 155.



<sup>24</sup>Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, 185.

<sup>25</sup>ibid., 90.

<sup>26</sup>Conway, "The Individual Versus the Crowd", 859.

<sup>27</sup>Le Bon, The Crowd, 5.

<sup>28</sup>Lewis, Blast, No. 2, 94.

<sup>29</sup>ibid., 94.

<sup>30</sup>Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, 81.

<sup>31</sup>ibid., 84.

<sup>32</sup>ibid., 17.

<sup>33</sup>ibid., 71-72.

<sup>34</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 83-84.

<sup>35</sup>Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 226.

<sup>36</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 87.

<sup>37</sup>ibid., 87.

<sup>38</sup>ibid., 136.

<sup>39</sup>Fromm, Escape From Freedom, viii.

<sup>40</sup>ibid., xii.

<sup>41</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 168.

<sup>42</sup>ibid., 184.

<sup>43</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 66-67.

<sup>44</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 181.

<sup>45</sup>Lewis, Childermass, 308-309.

<sup>46</sup>Lewis, Monstre Gai, 142.

<sup>47</sup>ibid., 41.

<sup>48</sup>Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 373-374.



<sup>49</sup>ibid., 264.

<sup>50</sup>ibid., 265.

<sup>51</sup>Lewis, Satire and Fiction, 45.

<sup>52</sup>Lewis, The Wild Body, 234.

<sup>53</sup>Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 345.

<sup>54</sup>Lewis, The Wild Body, 233-234.

<sup>55</sup>ibid., 235-236.

<sup>56</sup>ibid., 56.

<sup>57</sup>ibid., 68.

<sup>58</sup>ibid., 68.

<sup>59</sup>ibid., 124.

<sup>60</sup>ibid., 126.

<sup>61</sup>ibid., 126-127.

<sup>62</sup>ibid., 190-191.

<sup>63</sup>ibid., 220-221.

<sup>64</sup>ibid., 234.

<sup>65</sup>ibid., 225-226.

<sup>66</sup>ibid., 229-230.

<sup>67</sup>Klapp, "The Fool as a Social Type", 157.

<sup>68</sup>ibid., 157.

<sup>69</sup>Lewis, The Lion and the Fox, 137.

<sup>70</sup>ibid., 137.

<sup>71</sup>Lewis, Rotting Hill, 27.

<sup>72</sup>ibid., 24-25.

<sup>73</sup>ibid., 22.



<sup>74</sup>ibid., 22.

<sup>75</sup>ibid., 26.

<sup>76</sup>ibid., 57-58.

<sup>77</sup>ibid., 66.

<sup>78</sup>Lewis, The Enemy of the Stars, 54.

<sup>79</sup>Morse, "Cain, Abel and Joyce", 50.

<sup>80</sup>Lewis, The Enemy of the Stars, 13.

<sup>81</sup>ibid., 25.

<sup>82</sup>ibid., 14.

<sup>83</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 420.

<sup>84</sup>Lewis, The Enemy of the Stars, 18-19.

<sup>85</sup>ibid., 45.

<sup>86</sup>ibid., 46.

<sup>87</sup>ibid., 46-47.

<sup>88</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 167.

<sup>89</sup>Lewis, The Enemy of the Stars, 54.

<sup>90</sup>Lewis, The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator, vii.

<sup>91</sup>Lewis, The Writer and the Absolute, 141.

<sup>92</sup>Lewis, "Plain Home Builder: Where is your Vorticist?", 157.

<sup>93</sup>Lewis, The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator, 96.

<sup>94</sup>ibid., 76.

<sup>95</sup>ibid., 93.

<sup>96</sup>ibid., 94.

<sup>97</sup>Lewis, Rude Assignment, 70.



<sup>98</sup>ibid., 70.

<sup>99</sup>ibid., 69.

<sup>100</sup>Lewis, The Writer and the Absolute, 142.

<sup>101</sup>Lewis, The Tyro, No. 1, 6.

<sup>102</sup>Lewis, Time and Western Man, 193.

<sup>103</sup>Fadiman, "Humorists, Clowns, Comics", 271.

<sup>104</sup>Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 46-48.

<sup>105</sup>ibid., 90.

<sup>106</sup>ibid., 305.

<sup>107</sup>ibid., 305

<sup>108</sup>Wagner, Wyndham Lewis, 121-122

<sup>109</sup>Lewis, The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator, 229.

<sup>110</sup>Lewis, Rude Assignment, 13.

<sup>111</sup>ibid., 13.

<sup>112</sup>Lewis, The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator, vii-viii.

<sup>113</sup>Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 190.

<sup>114</sup>Lewis, Blasting and Bombardiering, 89.

<sup>115</sup>ibid., 89.

<sup>116</sup>ibid., 103.

<sup>117</sup>Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 81.

<sup>118</sup>Lewis, One-Way Song, 46.

<sup>119</sup>Lewis, The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator, 149.

<sup>120</sup>Lewis, Wyndham Lewis the Artist, 83.



<sup>121</sup>Lewis, The Writer and the Absolute, 8.

<sup>122</sup>Lewis, The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator, 37-38.

### Chapter Three

<sup>1</sup>Erasmus, The Praise of Folly, 44.

<sup>2</sup>Smith, The Religions of Man, 43.

<sup>3</sup>Lewis, Rude Assignment, 20.

<sup>4</sup>Lewis, Hitler, 95.

<sup>5</sup>Lewis, The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator, 131.

<sup>6</sup>Lewis, Tarr, 238.

<sup>7</sup>Lewis, The Red Priest, 10.

<sup>8</sup>ibid., 38.

<sup>9</sup>ibid., 92-93.

<sup>10</sup>ibid., 93.

<sup>11</sup>ibid., 120.

<sup>12</sup>ibid., 95.

<sup>13</sup>Lewis, The Enemy, I, x.

<sup>14</sup>Lewis, Childermass, 156-157. (italics mine)

<sup>15</sup>ibid., 160-161.

<sup>16</sup>Nicoll, The World of Harlequin, 86.

<sup>17</sup>Welsford, The Fool, 305.

<sup>18</sup>Lewis, Childermass, 271.

<sup>19</sup>Nicoll, The World of Harlequin, 87.

<sup>20</sup>ibid., 87.



<sup>21</sup>Lewis, Childermass, 163.

<sup>22</sup>ibid., 168.

<sup>23</sup>ibid., 169.

<sup>24</sup>ibid., 169.

<sup>25</sup>ibid., 170.

<sup>26</sup>Nicoll, The World of Harlequin, 87.

<sup>27</sup>Lewis, Childermass, 171.

<sup>28</sup>ibid., 181.

<sup>29</sup>ibid., 226.

<sup>30</sup>ibid., 229-230.

<sup>31</sup>ibid., 211-212.

<sup>32</sup>ibid., 225.

<sup>33</sup>ibid., 232.

<sup>34</sup>ibid., 183-184.

<sup>35</sup>ibid., 340.

<sup>36</sup>ibid., 195.

<sup>37</sup>ibid., 191.

<sup>38</sup>ibid. 316.

<sup>39</sup>ibid., 179.

<sup>40</sup>ibid., 366.

<sup>41</sup>ibid., 188-189.

<sup>42</sup>ibid., 197-198.

<sup>43</sup>ibid., 195.

<sup>44</sup>ibid., 333.

<sup>45</sup>ibid., 359-360.



<sup>46</sup>Lewis, The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator, 82-83.

<sup>47</sup>Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, 85.

<sup>48</sup>ibid., 96.

<sup>49</sup>Welsford, The Fool, 305.

<sup>50</sup>Lewis, Childermass, 331.

<sup>51</sup>Sypher, "The Meanings of Comedy", 228.

<sup>52</sup>Lewis, Childermass, 358.

<sup>53</sup>ibid., 262.

<sup>54</sup>ibid., 262-263.

<sup>55</sup>ibid., 392-393.

<sup>56</sup>ibid., 274.

<sup>57</sup>ibid., 275.

<sup>58</sup>ibid., 276.

<sup>59</sup>ibid., 280.

<sup>60</sup>ibid., 295-296.

<sup>61</sup>ibid., 297.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

#### Books

Lewis, Wyndham. The Art of Being Ruled. London: Chatto and Windus, 1926.

\_\_\_\_\_. Blasting and Bombardiering. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1937.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Demon of Progress in the Arts. London: Methuen, 1954.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Diabolical Principle and the Dithyrambic Spectator. London: Chatto and Windus, 1931.

\_\_\_\_\_. Hitler. London: Chatto and Windus, 1931.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Human Age. Book 1: Childermass. London: Methuen, 1955. [Revised from 1928 edition]

\_\_\_\_\_. The Human Age. Book 2: Monstre Gai. Book 3: Malign Fiesta. London: Methuen, 1955.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Lion and the Fox. London: Methuen, 1955. [original pub. London: Grant Richards, 1927]

\_\_\_\_\_. One-Way Song. London: Methuen, 1960. [original pub. London: Faber and Faber, 1933]

\_\_\_\_\_. Paleface: The Philosophy of the "Melting Pot". London: Chatto and Windus, 1929.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Red Priest. London: Methuen, 1956.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Revenge for Love. London: Methuen, 1952. [original pub. London: Cassell, 1937]

\_\_\_\_\_. Rotting Hill. Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952. [original pub. London: Methuen, 1951]

\_\_\_\_\_. Rude Assignment. A Narrative of My Career Up-to-date. London: Hutchinson, n.d. [1950]

\_\_\_\_\_. Tarr. London: Egoist, 1918.



. Time and Western Man. Boston: Beacon Press, 1957.  
 [original pub. London: Chatto and Windus, 1927]

. The Wild Body. A Soldier of Humour and Other Stories.  
 New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1928. [original pub. London: Chatto  
 and Windus, 1927]

. The Writer and the Absolute. London: Methuen, 1952.

. Wyndham Lewis the Artist. From "Blast" to Burlington House.  
 London: Laidlaw and Laidlaw, 1939.

#### Articles and Transcripts

Lewis, Wyndham. "Plain Home Builder: Where is your Vorticist?",  
Architectural Review: A Magazine of Architecture and Decoration.  
 76. 456 (November 1934), 155-158.

. "Studies in the Art of Laughter", London Mercury. 30. 180  
 (October 1934), 509-15.

. "Rouault, Painter of Original Sin" [Typescript of lecture  
 corrections in Lewis's hand. Mrs. Wyndham Lewis], n.d.

#### Periodicals and Pamphlets edited by Lewis

ed. Lewis, Wyndham. Blast. A Review of the Great English Vortex.  
 London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, No. 1. [June 20, 1914]

. The Enemy. A Review of Art and Literature. London: The  
 Arthur Press, Vol. 1 (January, 1927).

. Satire and Fiction. The History of a Rejected Review by  
 Roy Campbell. Enemy Pamphlets, No. 1, London: The Arthur Press,  
 1930.

. The Tyro. A Review of the Arts of Painting, Sculpture and  
 Design. Nos. 1 and 2, London: Egoist Press, n.d. [1921 and 1922].



## Secondary Sources

## Books

Barr, Alfred H. Jr. Picasso. Fifty Years of His Art. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1946.

Blunt, Anthony, and Phoebe Pool. Picasso. The Formative Years. London: Studio Books, 1962.

Bragdon, Claude. Merely Players. New York: Knopf, 1929.

Canaday, John. Mainstreams of Modern Art. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959.

Collins, Cecil. The Vision of the Fool. London: Gray Walls Press, 1947.

Courthion, Pierre. Georges Rouault. New York: Abrams, 1962.

Disher, Willson. Clowns and Pantomimes. London: Constable, 1925.

Druon, Maurice. Bernard Buffet. London: Methuen, 1964.

Duncan, David Douglas. The Private World of Pablo Picasso. New York: Ridge Press, 1958.

Erasmus, Desiderius. The Praise of Folly. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963.

Fromm, Eric. Escape From Freedom. New York: Hearst, 1965  
[original pub. 1941]

Fülp-Miller, René. The Mind and Face of Bolshevism: An Examination of Cultural Life in Soviet Russia. Tr. from the German by F.S. Flint and D.F. Tait. London: Putnam, 1927.

Gilot, Françoise, and Carlton Lake. Life with Picasso. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964.

Handley-Read, C. The Art of Wyndham Lewis. London: Faber and Faber, 1951.

Huff, Theodore. Charlie Chaplin. New York: Henry Schuman, 1951.

Kenner, Hugh. Wyndham Lewis. London: Methuen, 1954.



Le Bon, Gustave. The Crowd. A Study of the Popular Mind. New York: MacMillan, 1938. [First English printing London: Unwin, 1896]

Nicoll, Allardyce. The World of Harlequin. A Study of the Commedia dell'Arte. London: Cambridge University Press, 1962.

Payne, Robert. Charlie Chaplin. New York: Ace Books, 1952.

Santayana, George. Soliloques in England and Later Soliloques. New York: Scribners, 1924.

Sitwell, Edith. Clown's Houses. Oxford: Blackwell, n.d.

Sitwell, Sacheverell. The Hundred and One Harlequins. London: Grant Richards, 1922.

Smith, Huston. The Religions of Man. New York: New American Library, 1958.

Sutton, Keith. Picasso. London: Spring Books, 1962.

Venturi, Lionello. Rouault: Biographical and Critical Study. Tr. from the Italian by James Emmons, Switzerland: Skira, 1959.

Wagner, Geoffrey. Wyndham Lewis. A Portrait of the Artist as the Enemy. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957.

Welsford, Enid. The Court Masque. London: Cambridge University Press, 1927.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Fool. His Social and Literary History. New York: Doubleday, 1961. [original pub. London: Faber and Faber, 1935]

#### Articles and Pamphlets

Aitken, Conrad. "Wyndham Lewis", A Reviewer's ABC. Miridian Books, 1958.

anon. "Fools", The Atlantic Monthly, (April, 1908), 571-572.

anon. "The Clown in Art", New York Times Magazine, (April 7, 1946). 32-33.

Boas, G. "Century of the Child", American Scholar, 7.3 (January, 1938), 268-276.



Bransten, Ellen. "The Significance of the Clown in Paintings by Daumier, Picasso and Rouault", Pacific Art Review, 3 (1944), 21-39.

Conway, Martin. "The Individual Versus the Crowd", The Nineteenth Century, 59 (1906), 859-865.

Disher, Willson. "Psychology of the Show", The Nineteenth Century, 100 (July-December, 1926), 141-147.

Fadiman, Clifton. "Humorists, Clowns, Comics", Party of One. Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1955, 271-273.

Kenner, Hugh. "The Devil and Wyndham Lewis", Gnomon. Essays on Contemporary Literature. New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 215-241.

Klapp, Orrin, E. "The Fool as a Social Type", American Journal of Sociology, 55 (September, 1949) 157-162.

Megroz, R. L. "The Immortal Clown", Thirty-One Bedside Essays. Oxford: Hall, (1951) 108-111.

Morse, Mitchel. "Cain, Abel and Joyce", ELH. 22, 48-60.

Pritchett, V.S. "The Eye Man", Books in General. London: Chatto and Windus, (1953), 248-253.

Seldes, Gilbert. "Burlesque, Circus, Clowns, and Acrobats", The Seven Lively Arts. New York: Sigmore, 251-254.

Spender, Stephen. "The Great Without", The Destructive Element. London: Jonathon Cape, 1935, 201-217.

Sypher, Wylie. "The Meanings of Comedy", Comedy. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956, 193-255.









**B29873**